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PIECES OF MIND

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The Testament of Joad
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God and Evil
etc.

PIECES OF MIND

by

C. E. M. JOAD



BY THE ROYAL WARRANT OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING

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PREFACE

IN trying to decide which passages from previously published writings should go into this collection of *Pieces of Mind*, I have been somewhat at a loss for a principle of selection. Most of my writings have been on philosophy, but there has also flowed a fairly continuous stream of political and social criticism and commentary. The philosophy is apt to be technical and it is difficult to select pieces of abstract argument without damaging the argument; torn from their context they are shorn of most of their sense. Political and social writings date and I have no wish to see most of them republished. I have been driven, then, to fall back upon the personal *motif*.

I have not written very much about myself, and what I have written is scattered up and down the pages of between thirty and forty books. Most of it, however, occurs in two pseudo-autobiographies, the *Book of Joad* and the *Testament of Joad*, and passages from these form the staple of the present volume. I call the autobiographies 'pseudo', because they are in no sense records of a life. I cannot flatter myself that my life has been in any way remarkable, or that what has happened to me has any particular importance, but I have views which I like to air, tastes which I want to share, convictions of whose truth I wish to persuade others, and eccentricities which I, like most of my kind, believe to be not eccentric at all but just plain common sense which has only to be communicated to people at large to secure their immediate acceptance and adoption. I have, then, deliberately selected those of my writings which are 'personal' in this sense for inclusion in the present book.

In the main the chronological principle has been adopted, passages from the earlier preceding those from the later books, but I have departed from a strict chronology in one or two instances in the interests of the over-riding 'personality' prin-

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ciple. The most eligible because the most personal pages have been selected first and there is a gradual decline in personal content as the book proceeds. Thus, one or two pages from the comparatively late *Journey Through the War Mind* which have a higher personal content—in one of them I even rise to the description of a mild, a very mild adventure—precede pages from earlier books whose personal reference is less direct.

The advantage of this method of selection is that it enables me to trace a certain direction of change, I would like to think, of development, in tastes and interests during the ten years preceding the war. The *Book of Joad* is the work of a comparatively young man, or rather of a middle-aged man saying a nostalgic farewell to his youth. It is jaunty, high-spirited, intellectually swash-buckling, and almost completely amoral. As the years pass, there is an abatement of high-spirits and a new pre-occupation with questions of conduct. The growing seriousness of the times is, it is obvious, beginning to make its mark upon me—or is it only that as one gets older the mind, as I once remarked in the earlier irreverent phase, gets full of ‘God-webs’?—while by the time *Guide to Modern Wickedness* is reached, I am preaching what are, in effect, disguised sermons.

The disadvantages are fragmentariness, repetition—pages dealing with the same subject, for example, the how, when, and where of walking and staying in the country turn up in different parts of the book, separated by pages on different topics—and egotism, since all the parts about me come first.

I must apologize for this, but take leave to remark that I have given the reader fair warning. If he does not want to read about me, he had much better leave the book alone.

C. E. M. JOAD

HAMPSTEAD,
July, 1942.

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from
THE BOOK OF JOAD
(written 1930-31).



FOOD

As a young man I took little account of food. It was not that I despised it as unspiritual, or regarded an appreciation of it as inconsistent with high endeavour. I simply had not had time to notice it. I ate what was put before me without paying much attention to what I ate. All I asked was that it should be enough in quantity. This attitude of indifference has ceased; to-day I regard food and drink as two of the major interests of life, and my meals are among the most important events of the day.

Lectured on Food. Looking back, I can date the change from a meal which I had with Mr. H. D. Harben in the autumn of 1914 and the homily which it provoked. H. D. Harben was a Socialist; he was rich, he was a gentleman, and he had a large place in the country. He was also an ardent suffragist. Suffragettes, let out of prison under the 'Cat and Mouse Act', used to go to Newlands to recuperate, before returning to prison for a fresh bout of torture. When the county called, as the county still did, it was embarrassed to find haggard-looking young women in dressing-gowns and djibbahs reclining on sofas in the Newlands drawing-room talking unashamedly about their prison experiences. This social clash of county and criminals at Newlands was an early example of the mixing of different social strata which the war was soon to make a familiar event in national life. At that time it was considered startling enough, and it required all the tact of Harben and his socially very com-

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petent wife to oil the wheels of tea-table intercourse, and to fill the embarrassed pauses which punctuated any attempt at conversation.

Harben took a fancy to me, regarding me as one of the coming young men in the Labour movement, and asked me one evening to dine with him in Town. The dinner was at Kettner's, where we sat at a table for two lit by a discreetly shaded red light, and a very good dinner it was. To me, however, all courses came alike. Uncompromisingly from the hors-d'œuvres to the savoury I discoursed. I talked of Socialism and the war, of women and books. I remember getting very excited over the question, whether anything, and if so what, would be lost in a journalistic paraphrase of a lyric of Shelley's. I also talked about the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission. . . .

As I talked I forgot what I was eating, forgot, indeed, that I was eating at all, refused dishes that were offered to me with a gesture of annoyance at the interruption, and flicked cigarette-ash into my Château-Yquem. At the end of the meal H. D. H. asked me if I had enjoyed my dinner. I replied casually that I had enjoyed it very much and went on with the Minority Report. Then it was that my host, genial man that he was, turned and rated me, dubbing me savage and barbarian for my loutish, my criminal indifference to good food.

I forget the exact words he used, but their substance made a lasting impression upon me. 'My good young fool,' he said in effect, 'give to this matter of food a little reflection. In the first place consider that you have four meals a day. On these meals you spend, or can spend with care, some three hours. Now let us suppose that your active waking day lasts for fifteen hours; then one-fifth of it will be spent in eating and drinking. Assume your length of life to be the average span of seventy years. Then you will spend in all some fourteen years continuously in shoving solid and liquid substances through an ugly little hole at the bottom of your face. What could be more bestial? What more absurd? Yet rightly treated, this bestiality can be transformed into an art, this absurdity into a source of solid satisfaction, one

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of the greatest that life has to offer. For man has contrived to make a grace of necessity and to found upon the satisfaction of a need the cultivation of an art. In this he chiefly shows his difference from the animals. And who are you, pray, to disregard the example of our ancestors, and in pride of intellect and dullness of spirit to neglect to cultivate this art which the wisest of our race have had the wit to derive from the necessities of their bodies, this flower that blossoms on the dunghill of men's appetites? There are not so many pleasures upon which human beings can count that they can afford to neglect even one of them, still less one which is so reliable and so punctually recurrent. One day you will learn this, unless of course you marry badly, or live in a boarding-house!'

English Food and French. H. D. H.'s arguments appealed to me on my most susceptible side; they appealed to my intellect. As an intelligent man I did not see how I could well ignore them. I did not ignore them, and now at the age of forty I have a pretty taste in food and quite a respectable one in clarets. I think, nevertheless, that it is questionable whether, in spite of what H. D. H. said, to cultivate a taste for food is the part of wisdom, at any rate in this country. A sensitive palate is more likely to be outraged than gratified. Travelling recently from Aberystwyth to London in the middle of the day and finding no dining-car on the train, I asked for a luncheon-basket. One was duly prepared for the price of 3s. 6d. Opening it I found that it contained two slices of fattish ham with a glaze on them, a slab of edible soap 'miscalled Cheddar which in most parts of England is the only cheese obtainable (this particular piece was mouldy and slightly furred in one corner), a tomato, three slices of bread (stale), two pats of butter, and a juiceless orange! The example, I admit, is sensational—I have rarely if ever paid so much for such abominable fare—also it is not quite fair to England. It is only in Wales that the extreme depths of culinary barbarity are plumbed; yet English food, although not sensationally bad, is bad enough. England, indeed, stands to Wales

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in this matter of food almost in the same relation as that in which France stands to England. To point the contrast, the week before I had had lunch on a French train. Hors-d'œuvres there were, and then a kidney omelette of just that right consistency between liquid and solid which seems to elude even the best English cooks. Veal followed with salad and a purée of potatoes. Then a chocolate bombe, delectable delicacy, and a choice of four different kinds of cheese with fruit and coffee to round off the meal. The quality was no less admirable than the variety. But this, you will say, was a served luncheon, not justly to be compared with an *ad hoc* luncheon-basket. Passing by the significance of the fact that food in Wales is not thought sufficiently important to justify the provision of luncheon cars for long-distance travellers, I will now compare basket with basket. A few days before the French train lunch just recorded, I informed the hotel where I was staying that I wished to go on an all-day expedition, and asked them to put me up some luncheon. They did. We unpacked a bewildering variety of comestibles arranged neatly in little parcels. First there were slices of sausages with crisp new bread and butter. The next thing we came upon was a long thin loaf. 'Why all this bread?' we asked ourselves. But the loaf was no loaf at all, but only a husk. It had, we found, been split down the middle, the inside was scooped out and there had been inserted a long, thin, and wholly admirable ham omelette. There were slices of veal with salad in a little cardboard box; there were cakes, sardines, peaches, and a bottle of white wine. And this was the ordinary picnic lunch of a hotel charging me the equivalent of 5s. 10d. a day!

It is a great trouble to me, this business of food. I love England, and, were it not for the unparagoned brutality of its diet, would never leave it. As it is, I go to France at least once a year to feed. The visits are gastronomically memorable—there is, for example, a whole series of feeding places in Périgord of which I could speak. . . . Memorable also are the returns. The last time I was in France I stayed at a little hotel in the Basque

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country, only a mile or two from the Spanish border. The cooking was admirable, and a point was made of consulting and, so far as possible, meeting the wishes of the guests. The cook, who was also the proprietor, would appear in the morning and discuss at length the details of lunch and dinner, soliciting suggestions with so expert an air that their acceptance seemed an honour, their rejection a rebuke. Trout was his speciality, and he was very earnest with us touching the different ways of preparing and cooking trout according to the season of the year and the precise local variety of the fish. Arrived in England we motored from Folkestone to London, and stopped for a meal at a fair-sized hotel at Ashford. The waiter, a depressed-looking individual, approached and I asked what was for lunch. The waiter seemed a little bewildered by the question, but finally said that there was soup. 'Soup?' said I. 'Yes! But what kind of soup?' The waiter looked more puzzled than ever. Presently he shrugged his shoulders and 'What kind of soup? Well, soup! Just soup,' he said. And 'just soup' it was. So with the fish. Again forgetting momentarily where we were, we asked for particulars of the fish to be supplied to us, and again the waiter replied, this time with a certain irritation, that the fish was 'Just fish', as if all fish were the same. And he was quite right. At that sort of hotel all fish is the same, a slab of utterly tasteless, white solid floating in a colourless liquid. Whatever it is called, it all tastes alike, that is, it all fails to taste at all, and, whatever it is called, it is almost always cod.

I have never been able quite to fathom this English indifference to food. Sheer culinary incompetence lies, I suspect, at the bottom of it, an incompetence which finds in the traditional Puritanism of these islands a convenient excuse behind which to shelter itself. The English are adepts at making a merit of their deficiencies. The flesh is sinful and should be mortified; too much attention to things appertaining to the stomach argues, it is thought, a neglect of those appertaining to the spirit. The flesh, I repeat, is sinful and should be mortified; our

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cooks take advantage of the injunction and mortify with a will. Now I suggest that the aroma of virtuous self-discipline with which the resultant assaults upon the stomach, the prunes, the boiled puddings, the hashes, and the chops are invested is merely a cloak to hide our lack of culinary skill. I have not noticed that English Puritanism requires us to outrage or to atrophy our other senses. Picture galleries are not regarded with disfavour; on the contrary, they are the legitimate prey of girls' schools. Yet what are pictures but an open and shameless indulgence of the sense of vision? The English again are notorious lovers of nature; nor do they think that any excuse is necessary to justify the deliberate and unashamed gratification of the sense of hearing by the varied sounds of a concert. It is only the palate which is discriminated against in this way; it is only against the sense of taste that Puritanism vents its displeasure at the pleasures of the senses. But then we can paint at a pinch, we can even compose music, or could once. Hence we are under no necessity to prove to ourselves that it is wicked to cultivate the arts of seeing and hearing. But we cannot cook and the palate is censured accordingly.

Prodigy among English Cooks. Of course there are exceptions. In these later years I have by God's grace happened upon one of them, and through her beneficent ministrations I hope to go down in gastronomic comfort to the grave. It is not only that she can cook, that she has imagination and knows the virtues of variety, that she can mix a salad like a French woman and make pastry like a traditional Yorkshire woman, though these things and many more like them are added unto her. Nor is it merely her negative virtues, her scorn for prunes and custard in all their forms, for moulds, for cold mutton, for tapioca, and for rice, her failure to take the taste out of vegetables by boiling them in water, her refusal to regard lettuce and beetroot drowned in oil and vinegar as a salad, that entitle her to respect. It is in her complete understanding and mastery of all the adjuncts and incidental appurtenances of the culinary art

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that her greatest merit lies. Like all masters she delights in the exercise of her skill. She has the French woman's gift, a gift amounting almost to magic, of preparing an elaborate and varied meal out of nothing at all, and she does this with a speed and absence of fuss which are the admiration of all who are privileged to behold her. I have seen this prodigy among English women play tennis until six forty-five, enter at six fifty an apparently empty kitchen, and produce therefrom by seven fifteen a perfectly cooked meal of four courses for seven people. Incredible, you will say, or point out, if you are a grudging and envious woman, that the dinner had really been prepared in the morning, that the kitchen was not, in fact, empty at all, but was bursting with maturing food which, hidden away in saucepans and ovens was boiling and roasting and stewing and simmering away, and had been since twelve o'clock that morning. No doubt; I am sure that all my women readers know how the trick was done, and will be quite ready to prove to me that it was no trick at all. Agreed! But why, if they do know it, cannot they reproduce it themselves, instead of, after hours of preliminary grumbling and fussing, peevishly outraging their miserable tables with the tasteless muttons, the overdone beefs, the manufactured custards, the dank moulds, the brick pastries, the milk puddings, and the enormous dingy company of stewed fruits week in and week out, until the overtaxed stomachs and congested guts of their unfortunate dependants rise in revolt and their owners pay in dyspepsia, chronic constipation, gastritis, colitis, or some one or other of the hundred ills that come from bad cooking and inappropriate feeding, the price of their wives' lazy contempt of the household arts?

WOMEN

I see that I have come inadvertently to the subject of women, and this seems as good a place as any in which to describe the modifications which my attitude to them has undergone. Everything that it is possible for men to say about women has already

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been said much better than I can say it. I shall, therefore, be brief and as matter of fact as possible.

Early Theorizings. As a young man I was, as I have explained, a member of advanced movements. Prominent among them was the movement to secure the vote for women: and not only the vote, for the vote was regarded merely as a symbol of that feminine emancipation which was to be the great achievement of the age. Women were, it was held, by nature the equals of men; capable of playing their part in the world of affairs, in art, in politics, in industry and commerce, they demanded the right to do so. It was only tradition and circumstances that had kept them back. Alter the tradition, remove the circumstances, and the true capacities of women would become apparent. So ran the argument of the times and I subscribed to it heartily. Not only did I regard women as my intellectual equals, but believing their tastes, their interests, their emotions, their desires to be fundamentally the same as my own, I looked forward to marriage with a beautiful blue-stocking, at once soul mate, bed-sharer, and thought-communicator, with whom I should spend an absorbed lifetime in the intellectual discussion of matters of abstract interest. That most women had neither talent nor taste for such a programme I was, I think, even then dimly aware; but there must, I conceived, be some who even now could reach the level I required, intelligent among women even as I was intelligent among men, while I held that potentially most women were capable of the higher intellectual life. Educate women and give them a fair chance, and the world would, I believe, team with females anxious and fitted to discuss with me the problems of abstract philosophy and millennial Socialism.

An element of irony was added to a situation already sufficiently absurd by my susceptibility to the physical charms of women, a susceptibility incapable at that time of being aroused without implicating in its excitement my emotions and my sentiments, which impelled me to invest a pretty face and a

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good figure with all the virtues of character and intellect. I had a penchant, moreover, for child wives and little baby faces. Intimidated by women of character and individuality, I was attracted by featureless dolls, clean slates for the writing of whatever my instincts impelled me to inscribe. What I fell in love with was not a woman but the aura of fictitious qualities with which my sentimentality invested her. Thus I imagined myself to be penetrating the depths of woman's nature, when I was, in fact, discovering myself. Character in a woman, the hard core of an alien personality, impeded the process of self-projection, and threatened the satisfaction of an egoism, which in intercourse with another sought only the fulfilment of itself.

Hence the women to whom my instincts impelled me, were the antitheses of those of whom my reason, hag-ridden by feminist theories, approved. The head was at war with—to call it by a polite name—the heart, and their opposition afforded a pleasant field in which the Comic Spirit might disport itself. The Comic Spirit was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity. Of the ensuing adventures, of the ecstasies with which they began and the disillusion in which they ended, of the unsuspected violence of my sentimental self and the terrible humiliations to which it subjected my reasoning self, of the awful boredom, which, after the first transports were over, remains the outstanding memory of my affairs with women, I do not intend to write. Each of these affairs has followed a more or less uniform course, in which, having overcome every obstacle to make a lover's Paradise, I have ended by discovering only a wilderness of ennui. I have begun by behaving unforgiveably to everybody in order to achieve a tête-à-tête, and ended by behaving unforgivably to the woman in order to end it. The recollections are humiliating to me and I have no reason to suppose that they will be diverting to others. I therefore omit them.

Later Discoveries. The effect of these encounters has been considerably to modify the views of women which I inherited from my feminist youth. I have not been able to avoid the conclu-

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sion that, in spite of the wide opportunities which the modern world offers to women for a fuller and more varied life than has hitherto been possible, it has made many of them singularly unhappy. I doubt, indeed, if the general level of instinctive happiness among women has often been lower. Whereas the human being who is performing reasonably useful work and is reasonably suited to his environment is contented unless he has some positive reason for discontent, the average woman, as I have met her, seems to be discontented unless she has some positive reason for contentment. She endeavours, therefore, to create positive reasons in the shape of amusements; and being unable to amuse herself, she hires other people to do her amusing for her. Hence arises a constant search for pleasure and excitement, a conception of entertainment as something for which one pays, and a vast expenditure of time and money in the endeavour to buy from others the happiness which no longer comes unsought. There is an immense industry in this country devoted solely to the amusement of women. The film, the dress-maker, the theatre, and the Church are its most important branches.

The theatre and the Church are institutions which are kept going almost entirely by women; they flock in crowds to matinéés, chatter like magpies whenever they get the chance—for example, during overtures and *entr'actes*—come in late, leave early, and chink with their tea-cups all through the second act. They obtain emotions of a rather different order from the services of the Churches, where they talk less and look about them more. There is also a large and spreading growth of substitute religions, Theosophy, Spiritualism, Christian Science, and so forth, which appeal to those women who are said to think freely because they do not think at all. In the intervals of being entertained by films, theatres, Churches, parties, dances, golf or tennis, unemployed women of the middle class suffer intolerably from restlessness and boredom.

Women in the Home. There is a controversy perpetually re-

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vived in the cheaper Press on the question of whether women should go back to the home. What is not usually realized by participators in this controversy is that for the middle-class woman—and it is over the middle-class woman that the controversy rages—there is no home to go back to. A home may be defined as a centre of interest, activity, and influence in which the housewife has traditionally performed important functions which demanded skill and merited respect. Growth of transport facilities, increase in mechanical and electrical appliances and the encroachments of the municipality have stripped the home of the majority of these functions and left of its manifold and varied duties only an automatic routine. The middle-class woman neither brews nor bakes; she does not wash; she has no skill in the making of preserves and regards cooking as on the whole a nuisance. To mitigate this nuisance she does not cook so much as warm up food that others have cooked for her; she does not prepare meals; she takes out of tins meals that are already prepared. She has no skill in shopping, but orders from the stores by telephone, or from the tradesman's van that calls at the door. She gets her gas from the gas company, her water from the municipality. Thus the once-varied duties of the home have dwindled into washing up, cleaning, sweeping, and bed-making, a round of boring routine duties which the woman of average intelligence can perform in a couple of hours in the morning, leaving her with energies unused and interests unawakened to get through as best she may the great tracts of unoccupied time in the afternoon and early evening. As for children, she has one, at most two, and often none at all; and, when she can, she hires other people to look after them for her.

Women in the World. If she complains, and rightly, that such a life is no life at all and turns to the outside world for scope for her energies and employment for her faculties, she finds a curious position. In theory the barriers which man has erected against women are down; practically no occupation is now closed to her; she may enter where she will. In fact, however

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the world persistently refuses to organize itself in such a way as to make room for her, or it makes room for her only at the bottom. It opens the doors of its offices and exhorts her to enter the professions; but it offers her dull and drudging work, and when by dint of sheer ability or gross conscientiousness she forces herself into the same positions as those held by men, pays her less for doing what they do. How often have I seen women of first-rate intelligence and some culture, replete with all the accomplishments which a University education can bestow, glad to take down the letters of illiterate boors, who cheerfully paid them three or four pounds a week for the privilege of ordering them about, pestering them with their attentions and picking their brains.

On the whole I cannot help thinking that there is some method in the world's churlishness. Women seem to me unsuited to the world of affairs. I do not mean that they cannot perform difficult and responsible tasks, and perform them well; but although they may perform them well, they do not perform them easily. Women in responsible posts are fussily and unnecessarily conscientious; there is a sense of strain, a creaking of machinery, and too often they achieve efficiency at the cost of losing not only their womanhood but their humanity. They never master a subject or a task sufficiently well to be at play with it, and one finds it difficult to resist the conclusion that they are condemning themselves to function in a medium other than that for which life intended them. Put them in positions of power and authority, and they are intolerable. How well one knows them, those principals, head mistresses, women staff clerks, supervisors, and manageresses, conscientious and bad-tempered, polite to superiors, rude to inferiors, maintaining a pedantic adhesion to the letter rather than to the spirit of rules, afraid to bend for fear they may break. They are unjust; they behave abominably to young women who are pretty; they are swayed by prejudices, given to favouritism, and inspire hatred in those who are unfortunate enough to be governed by them. For these vagaries sex starvation is, no doubt, partly to

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blame. In my view nobody should be put in a position of authority over his or her fellows who does not lead a normal and satisfied sex life. Those who are sexually starved almost inevitably find compensation for frustrated desires in the abuse of authority and the tyrannical exercise of power. They are driven by an urge to feel important, to throw their weight about, to make themselves felt. Often they are sadists moved to cruelty by unconscious envy of those whom they believe to be sexually satisfied.

It is only right that at this point I should make public avowal of what is, indeed, already sufficiently apparent, that I am prejudiced on this subject. Whenever I have had dealings with women in positions of authority, they have turned out badly; whenever I have been so unfortunate as to be subject to their power, I have been made to suffer. Powerful women always dislike me and their reasons are well drilled in respect of their capacity to invent justifications for giving vent to their dislike. I have always found women to be very good rationalizers; they think what they think because they feel what they feel, but their reasons are never at a loss for arguments to justify the indulgence of their feelings.

Humiliated as I have been at the hands of women whose authority has enabled, whose dislike has predisposed them to humiliate me, I am naturally prejudiced against women in authority. I know, as I said above, that most of them can do certain things very well, and that there are no things that some of them cannot do reasonably well. I know, for instance, that women are more efficient telephone operators than men; they put you through more quickly, forget less readily, get fewer wrong numbers, take more trouble. Yet I am always glad to hear a man's voice answer when I take down the receiver, and look indulgently upon mistakes by a male operator which, if the offender were a woman, would evoke a flood of irritable curses culminating in a diatribe upon the inefficiency of the sex.

Having admitted the prejudice and indicated its cause, I feel that the full explanation of the bad temper and taste of the pre-

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ceding paragraphs is still to seek. The Freudian, no doubt, will be ready with a host of suggestions, but for reasons which it would be indelicate to give, I cannot accept them. The root of the trouble lies, I suspect, in the commonplace fact that I don't like women's company. I do not mean that there are not individual women with whom I would as gladly be as with any man, and, of course, when I have been in love with a woman, nobody else would satisfy me at all. But taking them by and large, they are not, I submit, such good companions as my own sex. They are not as interesting, as amusing, as well informed, or as even-tempered; they are apt to take offence, they sulk, they nourish strange grievances, feel incomprehensible slights, and are over-given to quarrelling. I once heard somebody ask Shaw at a public meeting whence he derived the insight into women that enabled him to create the heroines of his plays? *Candida*, it was said, and Lady Cicely in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* were women more real and more lifelike even than the heroines of Shakespeare. Shaw replied that his recipe was perfectly simple, 'I think what I would have done and said in the particular circumstances of the situation, and then I make my women characters do and say the same. I assume, that is to say, that women are exactly like myself.' There was never a more flagrant lie. I have not found women in the least like me (and if they are not like me, still less are they like Shaw); so little, indeed, have they turned out on examination to be like me, that I cannot better describe the change that has characterized my views of women since I was an ardent young feminist than as an increasing realization of their differences from myself.

Boringness of Women. One of the chief of these differences is a comparative absence in women of objective external interests. My chief interests are outside myself; they are in philosophy, politics, music, literature, food, games, and the countryside. I concern myself with these things more than I do with people. In fact, although I care for a few people immensely, I think

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about people comparatively little. Now women do not seem to me to be interested in things for their own sake; they are interested in them only in so far as they react upon people. They are interested, for example, not in music but in its composers, its interpreters, and the reactions to it of particular individuals. Above all, they are interested in themselves, in the effect which they are making, in other people's attitude towards them, in the subtle changes and *nuances* of a psychological atmosphere. A woman will notice a dozen changes in the reactions upon one another of a group of people, when I notice none at all. It is this psychological preoccupation which, I think, makes women so infernally dull, so boring as companions.

The self, like any other organism, must, if it is to be fruitful, be crossed with things other than the self; it must be fertilized by experience and harrowed by a diversity of interests. It chiefly thrives upon an absorption in external things, the word 'things', of course, being intended to include ideas and intellectual pursuits. Denied these 'things', the soul grows poor and thin—some people's souls can be heard to rattle like dried peas in a pod—and presently withers away altogether. Or a soul cut off from a healthy interest in outside things may grow rank and lush; it ceases, in fact, to be a soul and becomes a temperament. As such it monopolizes its unfortunate possessor, diverts all nourishment to itself, and judges everything by its ability to minister to its own appetites. Thus persons with artistic temperaments are always taking their artistic temperatures. In this respect most women are artistic. A good soul like a good body should be as unobtrusive as possible; in so far as it functions properly, it should not be noticed either for good or for ill. It is only when one is unhappy that one thinks about oneself, and the extent of their self-absorption may be the measure of women's fundamental discontent. Whatever be the reason, I find them on the whole dull, trivial, and vain. With unimportant exceptions, I would always sooner be in the company of men, and women themselves seem to be of the same opinion. Few of the women I know have any women friends. Their ap-

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parent friendships with each other will usually be found to hinge upon their relationships with men. Normally two women tolerate one another because they are respectively attached to men who happen to be friends, and this they often do the better to destroy the friendship. When this end has been effected, the women's acquaintanceship lapses.

I have been in the habit for many years of spending occasional week-ends in the country with a couple who cultivate week-end entertainment as an art. Very carefully they select their guests. The chief qualification in a guest is that he or she should be a prominent person, with the reservation that the kind of prominence should vary as much as possible from guest to guest and from week-end to week-end. For example, if there are prominent politicians one week, there will be prominent painters the next. If famous people cannot be had, they will stage a week-end consisting entirely of the relations of famous people. Inevitably, the English social system being what it is, wives have to be asked with their husbands. On a recent occasion *apropos* of the eternal and eternally renewed discussion of the position and prospects of women in the modern world, we went through the names, carefully preserved in the visitors' book, of all the women who had visited that house for week-ends during the last few years. Our object was to discover how many had been invited on merits, how many had come merely as appendages of men. The word 'merits' as applied to women we defined as including not only prominence in some particular department of life or letters, but the possession of some special gift or talent, some social *flair* or personal charm, in virtue of which a woman might be considered an acquisition to a party and so invited for her own sake. We came to the conclusion that of only about five per cent of the women could it be said that they had been included on 'merits'; the remainder had come as male attachments. I believe this result to be not unrepresentative. There are many charming and intelligent women in the world, but they are very few compared with the number of those who are stupid and boring. And even where

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there are both charm and intelligence, they are not always in the ascendant. Let the waters of these easily ruffled temperaments be ever so slightly disturbed and the charm is dissipated, the intelligence obscured, and the cultivated woman becomes an offended chit.

Women in Work and Talk. For these reasons my present view is that women on the whole are better excluded from the normal activities of life, at any rate of my life. For special purposes, for holidays, for the refreshment of the spirit, the relaxation of the mind, or the illnesses of the body, for occasions when one's wounded spirit demands the balm of flattery or the solace of apparently perfect comprehension, one's intelligence the stimulus which only a slightly inferior intelligence can give, they are admissible, even necessary. But for the ordinary usages and purposes of life, for the hatchings of schemes, for the organization of undertakings, for administration, for joint endeavour, for intellectual discourse, for shared activity whether in work or in play, I demand the company of men. Above all, I demand it when there is work to be done. The influence of women is, I have found, inimical to work; there are too many women who make it their business to see that none of the world's work is done while they are about. How often in moments of irritation induced by exasperated desire have I vowed that they ought not to be let out at all, and that a return to the Seraglio system is a condition of the further advance of civilization.

And, since the best conversations are those that accompany feeding, I would, if I had my way, exclude them from the dinner table. Women, I think, ought not to sit down to table with men; their presence ruins conversation, tending to make it trivial and genteel or at best merely clever. With women present there are bound to be topics at which faces lengthen and voices drop. There will be closed subjects and spades which must be called by other names. But, if there is to be good conversation, none of the chambers of the mind must be locked; if the mind is to play its prettiest games, it must have all heaven

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and earth for its playground. Close one door in the house of the universe, and intellect sits hobbled and sulking in the lobby, with the result that instead of epigram, paradox, and wit, you have only reminiscence, anecdote, and pun.

And, should it after all manage to be born in their presence, intelligent conversation only puts ideas into the heads of the women. Now women are rarely at ease with ideas; they do not know how to play with them, to take them lightly and naturally, appraising them as one appraises a flavour or a piece of old china, and putting them away again when one has done with them. Women do not so much have ideas as experience a rush of ideas to the head. Arrived there they become invested with an emotional content; they are either wicked or noble, shocking or refined; the best that one can hope is that they should be accepted as merely true or dismissed as merely false. As if any idea were *merely* true or false! No, from good company and good talk women should be absent.¹

I am quite aware that women have been among the best and wittiest talkers in the world. They lived in eighteenth-century France and possibly, I speak from hearsay, in the Athens of the late fifth and early fourth centuries. I am also prepared to concede that women may again talk well and learn to mix in society as human beings with free reasons, and not merely as women. But I am speaking here not of what women have been and may be, but of women as I have found them. If you tell me again that the position of women to-day is transitional and difficult because it is transitional, that they have got one foot out of the home yet do not know where to put it, and that they have not yet found themselves in the larger life which opens out to them, I am prepared to agree. No doubt there are very good reasons for the state of affairs I have described, but that does not alter the fact that it is as I have described it. While it remains so, I shall rate cheerfulness, good temper, and good cooking above all other virtues in a woman—thank goodness, I have found them at last; for intelligent discourse and the life

¹ I don't think I can hold to this now. (C. E. M. J. 1942.)

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of the spirit, for the jolly march of mind with mind, for good company and good fellowship, I shall be content to look to men.

My Prejudice and its Causes. If you tell me finally that I am prejudiced, I have already told you that and can but agree again. I started my adult life, as I have recounted, with such high hopes of women, that the process of disillusionment has left a bitterness behind. If I was never sentimental enough to expect women to be soul mates, at least I thought to treat them as intellectual equals. It was a shock to find that the equality had been imposed by myself upon unequals who resented it. If only women could have remained at the silent-film stage, all would have been well; but the invention of talking has been as disastrous in women as it has in the cinema.

Another reason for my prejudice is my clothes. I am an incurably slovenly and ill-dressed man; clothes, I regard, not as an adornment, not even as a necessity, but as a nuisance. When I have been 'hard up', I have always insisted on having luxuries such as music, books, and travel, and dispensed with so-called necessities such as decent clothes, washing, and hair cuts. Nor is this attitude to clothes without its social uses. My shabby and ill-fitting garments have proved an admirable touchstone for people, separating out, as it were, the sheep from the goats among potential acquaintances. Persons who show a disposition to turn up their noses at me because of my slovenly appearance, are *ipso facto* persons whom it is not worth my while to know.

Women, however, do not share my point of view. All the women under whose charge I have come—and there have been several—have taken it upon themselves to take me sartorially in hand. They have made it their business to smarten me up, putting creases into my trousers, starch into my collars and shirts, and oil into my hair. They have succeeded only in producing a passable representation of an unpleasant little race-course tout at the cost of making me feel thoroughly uncomfortable. Sooner or later they have grown frightened at the

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effects they produced and given me up in disgust as incorrigible. The discomforts I have endured during these periodic smartening-up processes, and the contempt with which I have been visited when they have 'failed', have no doubt coloured my views of those who inflicted them. I have concluded that individuality is anathema to women, and that, not content with looking all alike themselves, they are not happy unless their menfolk are equally indistinguishable.

But after careful consideration I come back to boredom as the root of my prejudice. On the occasions on which I have fallen in love I have been impelled by an overmastering desire to be alone with the loved woman. I have usually succeeded in this object. There has followed a period of ecstatic happiness, but it has been relatively short; and, as soon as it began to wane, boredom has set in. I do not know that this should be taken to imply an assertion of the greater tediousness of women as compared with men, although I adhere to my view that women are more boring than men in proportion as they are less well informed and more self-centred. It is rarely that women possess specialized knowledge and information, and it is knowledge and information which, properly controlled, constitute the best basis for talk. But it is not of this deficiency that I am thinking, when I remember how women have bored me. I am a person inordinately susceptible to boredom; boredom is, indeed, my chief enemy. I keep it at bay with the weapon of variety. My instinctive demand is for new faces, new sensations, change of scene and change of interest, and I find the society of one or two people, provided they remained the same one or two people, irksome after a comparatively short time. For this reason I have always hated walking tours. Beglamoured by Stevenson and Hazlitt I have set off with a couple of men for a four or five days' tour through rural England, and by the end of the second day I have hated the sight of them. When I have been walking with a man all day, I want somebody else to talk to in the evening. So should he. To be stimulating to or stimulated by a person whose fount of conversation you have

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already drained dry during the day and would like to turn over to somebody else like a sucked orange in the evening is beyond my powers. If you say that one should not want to talk in the country, I agree; but, if silence is your object, you were better walking alone. Now marriage is like a walking tour continuing for years and extended into the night.

It should now be apparent that my emphasis upon the boringness of women is due to the fact that, having from time to time been impelled by the Life Force to shut myself up alone with them, I have spent far more time in the company of single women than in that of single men. My reason again, as so often where women are concerned, is at war in this matter with my instinct, my reason demanding the company of intellectual equals, my instinct a *tête-à-tête* with a woman. As a result I have been intolerably bored by women, and have come, no doubt unjustly, to blame them for the unfortunate results of situations which, under the influence of the cosmic process, whatever it is, that pitchforks us into life, I have insisted on creating. I suspect that most married men have something of this feeling, although perhaps it is not as consciously realized. They go into Society to avoid a *tête-à-tête*, quite as often as a bachelor does to avoid solitude.

MUSIC

Music. Whatever reservoir of aesthetic sensibility I possess has flowed into the channel of music; yet I never heard, or never knew that I heard, any music that was worth hearing until I was well over twenty. As a boy I knew all the popular songs of the time, and whistled them incessantly. There were better songs then than there are now with more rhythm and more melody. I suppose that the final *demise* of English popular singing, which has been continuously decaying since the Elizabethan age, when England was a nation of singing birds, must have set in about 1913 with the invasion of jazz. It is impossible either to whistle jazz or to remember it, and the first sign of the

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conquest of England by America is that the Americans should have made us like themselves, a songless nation.

But it was no part of my public-school education to make me aware of the fact that music existed except in the form of popular songs; and, although at Oxford I fell for Gilbert and Sullivan, absorbed Sullivan's music and incorporated it into my being, I cannot be said to have had any intercourse with music proper until my last year. I used, I remember, to maintain that all classical music was lacking in 'tune', by which I meant a well-defined melody, and that those who went out of their way to hear it were affected *poseurs*. I can even remember attending occasionally and in a spirit of tolerant detachment several of those admirable concerts that we used to have at Balliol on Sunday night, but I cannot remember that, with the exception of a slow movement in a quartet of Grieg's which moved me strangely, they ever made much impression on me.

There came a time at last when it was my fate to hear often repeated the last movement of the Pathétique Sonata of Beethoven and Chopin's Raindrop Prelude. They were badly played, in fact they were being practised, but by dint of constant repetition they forced the gate of my soul and I thrilled to a new experience. The entry, once effected, other music was not slow to follow in the breach. The early Sonatas of Beethoven came first accompanied by the Nocturnes and Preludes of Chopin. Chopin soon dropped away, but Beethoven became a god. My friends and acquaintances, however inexpert and unwilling, I bullied into playing his sonatas upon the piano—I even went out of my way to cultivate the acquaintance of pianists—and was so worked upon by the Moonlight, the Appassionata, and the Waldstein, that, unable to sit still, I used to dance about the room in a ferment of excitement. As the apogee of this phase I remember a concert at the Queen's Hall at which the Kreutzer sonata was played by Adela Verne and Isaye. It was the first time I had heard it, and, as the insistent rhythms of the first movement with their passionately reiterated refrain beat upon my ears and tore at my vitals, I could no longer contain myself,

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but squirmed in my seat, sweated at every pore, and at last wept uncontrollably, a proceeding so little to the liking of my neighbours that I was forced to go out and take refuge in the lavatory.

As a result of this concert I wrote to Adela Verne in grateful acknowledgement of the intense pleasure she had given me, praying to be allowed to come and hear her play. It did not matter, I hinted, whether the playing was in private or public, at home or in concert room; whenever or wherever it was, she had only to say the word, and I would come. I forget how she put me off, courteously, I think, but firmly.

Beethoven, Bach, Mozart. I recount these early extravagances, albeit with a certain diffidence, to indicate the intensity of the effect which music in general, and Beethoven's music in particular, produced in me. There was no pose or affectation in my behaviour—these ebullitions of emotion were, so far as I can remember, quite genuine—and, when the next phase came and Beethoven gave way, as in due course he did, to Bach, the emotions were no less intense, although the expression of them was less eccentric. I am still in the Bach phase and expect to remain there.¹ For the last fifteen years I have played the forty-eight preludes and fugues every morning for twenty minutes after breakfast upon the pianola, an instrument in the use of which I am become by continual practice fairly proficient. Bach to be enjoyed to the full should always be played in the morning. His music demands a brain fresh and alert, a sensibility as yet unsullied by the experiences of the day. Exquisitely pure, it requires a similar purity in those who would fully savour its appeal; emotionless, it requires that the emotions of the listener should be dormant. Bach, in fact, should be heard in an emotional clean sheet. Although I must have played the forty-eight preludes and fugues of the Well Tempered Clavichord hundreds of times, my enjoyment of them is still fresh. If I feel an occasional tendency to tire, I have only to play other

¹ No longer true. It is Mozart now. (C.E.M.J. 1942.)

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music for a week and at the end of it I return full of ardour to Bach, like a lover to his mistress. Bach, I am convinced, achieves in music a supremacy over all-comers unequalled by that attained by the practitioner of any other art. It is a humiliating reflection, which honesty alone compels me to record, that I used to say the same of Beethoven.

Since Beethoven died, practically no music has been written that I wish to hear. It is true that I am fond of Schubert, especially in hot weather; but he died only a year after Beethoven and it is only in the work of his last two or three years that he shows signs of becoming anything more than an immensely prolific writer, very occasionally inspired, with a great gift of melody and a great vice of repetition. He announces lovely themes, and then, not knowing what to do with them, repeats them until they cease to be lovely. Schumann, too, announces lovely themes and then loses them in a cloud of romantic vapourings. The flame of his inspiration, rarely clear, is normally invisible in the smoke of his passions. His music is a standing illustration of the need for discipline. But the A Minor concerto is full of lovely things and achieves greatness.

Chopin is for women, drawing-rooms, and twilight. Its delicious woefulness is pleasant enough in its way, but is no more to be taken seriously as music than a savoury or an ice is to be taken seriously as a meal. Since Chopin there has been nobody, at least for me. For the rest I love Handel, admire and perpetually underrate Haydn—I never hear him without being surprised that he should be so good, resolve not to do him the injustice of underrating him again, and immediately forget his merits until my next hearing and next surprise; I do the same injustice to Arnold Bennett—think Purcell the greatest Englishman who ever lived—I would give all the plays of Shakespeare for Purcell's music to 'The Fairy Queen'—and consider their neglect of Purcell, and incidentally of Byrd (composers comparatively ignored even by the patriotic B.B.C.) to be a convincing demonstration of the hopeless unmusicality of the English, who, unable to discover genius for themselves, can only

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admire what the Germans and the Italians discover for them. I enjoy Scarlatti and Gluck and worship Mozart only next to Bach.

Mozart's operas are the only operas which I care to hear, the incredible loveliness of the music triumphing even over the intolerable stupidity of the medium. The accompanying music is, indeed, so lovely, that the voice is for the most part to be regarded as an intrusion; one longs for the singer to stop making a noise, that one may the better listen to what the orchestra is doing. It is particularly unfortunate that women should be permitted to attend operas, since their view seems to be that except when somebody is singing there is nothing to listen to. Operas, they know, are musical pieces in which people sing; *ergo*, if nobody is singing, nothing of importance can be happening. Music unembellished by the human voice may be all very well at concerts, but is obviously not meant to be listened to at an opera. As a consequence directly the voices stop, they burst out chattering like a flock of magpies. I have known the lovely *entr'acte* in *Figaro* made practically inaudible by women's chattering. But Schopenhauer has said all that there is to say on the subject and I shall not dwell upon it further.

Music is, perhaps, the most important single influence in my life; if I speak no more of it here, it is because I have devoted a whole chapter of this book¹ to its performance, its perversions, its listeners, and its interpreters.

NATURE

Nature. Of nature I find it more difficult to speak. Since I was twenty years old the country has become with every year that passes a more important factor in my life. Yet I do not know what to say of it that has not already been said by others far better than I can say it. Men like Hazlitt and Jefferies, W. H. Davies. John Clare, Edmund Blunden, and W. H. Hudson, above all W. H. Hudson, have given expression to the feelings which the English country arouses in me with a beauty of utter-

¹ Not included in this anthology.

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ance which I cannot hope to achieve. Therefore I had better confine myself to a bald statement of facts.

Until I was twenty-two or three I took little interest in the country. At Oxford I was insensibly affected by the beauty of the place, but hardly realized the influence until I had left it. Then I took to walking and for a dozen years or so was a reasonably energetic cross-country walker. Yet, although I went often into the country, it was for the exercise of the body rather than the refreshment of the soul. I used to go with groups of people numbering from half a dozen to twenty, and it was my pleasure to choose the route and lead, running down steep places, clambering over rocks and taking them, often protesting, through hedges and over fields. Some of the fruits of this phase of my development are gathered into a later Chapter.¹

All the time my feeling for nature was growing, but the growth was unconscious. To-day it has reached a point at which I cannot be really at rest away from the country, or at least from such imitation country as Hampstead Heath affords. To spend a night in the middle of a large city is for me a positive discomfort; I cannot bear to wake up in London on a fine morning, and to be in London on a Sunday morning, whether wet or fine, is enough to depress me for the day. If I have to spend the day in the middle of London, I pray God that it will be wet; if the sun shines, I am too restless to go collectedly about my business.

Nor is it only the countryside that I need; it must be the English countryside. Time and again I have been to beautiful places abroad, the Italian Lakes, the Alps, the Mediterranean Coast, the Pyrenees, and been homesick for the English country. It is not that I do not know these places to be beautiful, merely that I do not feel at home in them. The eternal blue sky welcomed for a few days, is felt as a nuisance by the end of a week; the flowers are not English flowers; the grass is coarse and sparse; the rocks jagged and harsh; there is nowhere to lie about. The English country is unequalled in the facilities it

¹ Not included.

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provides for lounging and lying about. Whether these are the reasons which really determine my disapproval, or whether, as is more likely, they are merely rationalizations of an instinctive discomfort felt in foreign lands, I do not know. What I do know is that before a fortnight has passed I am afflicted with violent nostalgia and come scuttling back to England.

To say anything new about the beauty of the English countryside is beyond my powers; nor shall I attempt it. I have, however, devoted the whole of a later chapter to a lament on its destruction. In this chapter I propose to permit myself a word on my own reactions to nature which, being personal and private, will at least escape the charge of being a *mere* repetition of the thoughts of others.

Classes of Nature Lovers. It has seemed to me that lovers of nature can be divided into two classes. The first desire to *lose themselves* in nature; they like wide views and big spaces, mountains and moorlands and great bare fields; they like, the more sophisticated of them, flat fenland country, where the sky is the chief feature and where, sensing their own insignificance in the vast prospect, they may forget the nervous little clod of wants and ailments which is the self, by absorption in something greater than the self. This class, then, desire to transcend themselves by fusion with something other than themselves, and they look upon nature as a vast absorbent, a sort of sponge for the swabbing of their own individualities.

The second class go to nature not to forget but to realize themselves; their desire is that their personalities shall be enhanced not absorbed. Accordingly, they seek not large scenery but small, not downs and open spaces but wooded dells and glades, copses, lanes, and meadows, the courses of little streams, or narrow valleys running up into the hills. Mountains they like, but like for their lower levels; eschewing heights which make them feel insignificant and therefore uncomfortable. People belonging to this second class, wish, as I conceive—and I belong to this class myself, so speak with the more confidence—not to

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lose themselves in nature but to affirm and strengthen themselves by absorbing her. Their instinct is to take up, as it were, the essences of nature into themselves that they may incorporate them with their being. They would know a spot so well that they can conceive themselves to have left the impress of their own personalities upon it. Now this fancy can only be entertained in small homely places, in orchards, at a turn of a lane or in a glade in a wood.

My own natural history has consisted in a gradual widening of appreciation, an extension of affection from scenery of the second type to that of the first. Once I liked only what was small, detailed, and irregular. Surrey was an ideal county for me, Surrey and the New Forest part of Hampshire. It was only later that I came to appreciate moorland and mountain and the line of a down against the sky. And, as my feeling for the country has grown more catholic, I have come to see that my earlier classification of nature lovers was not the most appropriate; at any rate I find that in my own experience it has been gradually superseded. I am now inclined to think that a love of the country which is both catholic and discriminating will embody two rather different elements—there are more than two, of course, for the feeling that binds us to nature is a rope of many strands—but two seem to stand out in sharp contra-distinction.

There is a purely instinctive feeling that takes its origin from our remote past. Nature is the mother of our race, and country sights and sounds, above all country smells, touch some ancestral chord that stretches back to our savage, even it may be to our sub-human past. The touch of the bole of an oak, the smell of fallen leaves or new-mown hay, the tang of a mountain brook or the feel of lush meadow grass against the face, these are things to which we respond with an instinctive love that not all the unnatural conditions of an urban existence have been able entirely to stifle. Take a train from London on a spring morning or in autumn and get out at a wayside station. If you are lucky, the sense of the country will descend upon you with such a wealth of association that for a time you are like a man

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drugged. It is a sense which brings balm to the spirit and rest to the soul. For me the feeling is exactly like that of a home-coming after a long absence; here, at last, I feel, I can relax and be at peace. But there is another element in our love for the country which refers not to the past but to the future, which is less a reminder of what we have been, than a foretaste of what we may become.

I believe that the capacity for aesthetic appreciation is the highest, as it is the most recently evolved, of all human characteristics. The aesthetic emotion which we experience in the presence of great painting or great music is, I believe, the first intimation, fleeting and uncertain, of a type of experience which man will one day enjoy more fully and more continuously. The appreciation of art is thus a foretaste of what is to come; it does not remind us of the experiences that were ours in the dim past of the race; it points forward to those which will be ours in our more developed future. The issues raised by this assertion belong to philosophy rather than to biography; at any rate they fall outside the scope of this book, and I shall not therefore pursue them here, especially as I have written about them at considerable length elsewhere.¹

Grant, however, that there may be something in the theory, grant too that there are aesthetic responses involved in our appreciation of nature not fundamentally different from the emotions we feel for a picture or a fugue, and it will follow that there is an element in man's complex relation to nature which points him forward to the consciousness which will one day be more fully his. For example, the emotion we feel for the line of a down, or for an elm in August standing solid and solitary in a field against a sunset sky.

I hope that it will not set the reader against me if I say that my feeling for nature which originally was almost entirely primitive, as instinctive as my desire for food when hungry and for rest when tired, has become increasingly aesthetic. The old feeling still remains—there are certain sorts of wild places,

¹ See my *Matter, Life and Value*, Chapters VI and IX.

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a tiny valley, for instance, in a mountainous country strewn with boulders and great rocks and gay with flowers and small blossoming trees that I never enter without an immediate feeling of home-coming; it is almost as if I remembered being a faun—but it is not so strong as it was, and increasingly my pleasure in nature approximates to my pleasure in great music or a perfectly proportioned building. Types of country, which I should once have found merely dull because of their lack of detail and richness, now give me intense satisfaction.

The Fascination of Essex. Take Essex, for example. There was a time when I thought of Essex as an uninteresting county. That it was flat everybody knew; it was also, I thought, featureless, without woods, moors, or wild places, consisting merely of great tracts of agricultural land stretching to the sea, intersected by the muddy estuaries of sluggish rivers. Visiting it constantly, however, as the more obvious country to the south and west of London became increasingly built over, I found there strange and unsuspected beauties.

Essex is a country of great prospects bounded by low skylines. Topping a little rise you see the countryside spread out before you like an enormous picture. So viewed it is seen to shape itself into lines of beauty; its forms are significant. It is a land of great trees. I do not mean that the trees are especially large—although there are as fine trees in Essex as in any county in England—as that, owing to their peculiar shape and spacing, they acquire significance. Each tree has a distinct form, an individuality; three or four stand together, a solitary group in the empty fields, brooding presences living an inner life of their own, at once a symbol and an enigma. What the symbol stands for is as unknown as the answer to the enigma. . . . Over the wide mud stretches play curious lights, and the horizon has the power, more than any other that I know, of suggesting unimagined mysteries beyond. Almost all the villages in Essex are lovely, and the spire of Thaxted Church, seen from practically any direction over an immense distance, is unforgettable.

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Over the whole country there is the sense of an impalpable decay. It is very deserted, and its winding roads, instead of leading you to a village, end abruptly in solitary farm-houses. It is something of a shock to find that the farm-house with its whitewashed walls, mellow tiles, and exquisite shape, is derelict. To walk across the Essex countryside is for me a disturbing, almost a frightening, experience. One cannot accustom oneself to the fact that it should be so lovely and so completely deserted. Corn-growing, its one industry, has collapsed, and there is literally nothing left. It seems impossible to believe that there should not be something beyond that immensely significant skyline, something, one knows not what, to give point and purpose to the whole. One reaches it and looks beyond only to see another empty landscape, featureless like the last, stretching to another skyline. The Essex country is like life, in that, without point or climax, it nevertheless perpetually provokes the expectation of both. Of it all that one can say is that it goes on. And how it does go on! There are places near the Essex coast not fifty miles from London which are as solitary and remote as any in England; there is a seaside village eighteen miles from the nearest station. It is as if the English countryside, doomed as it is to ultimate dereliction had, like a disused limb, begun to atrophy in its extremities. The decay has set in in the east, whence it is destined to spread westwards until all the English country is either derelict or suburb.

Now it is impossible to explain the hold which a countryside like that of Essex has over the affections of those who know it as an instinctive response to primitive and exuberant nature. There is nothing exuberant about Essex. The Essex scene is set in a minor not a major key; it is autumn twilight, Debussy's music, Monet's pictures, anything you like that is dim and plaintive; but it is emphatically not a source of rude and primitive life. I am not sure that my love for it is healthy, but I am sure that it is not elementary. A youth or a savage would see nothing in Essex; it is the sage or the artist who savours the formal beauty of its exquisite decay.

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ADMIRATIONS

I have sought in this chapter to describe, as well as I can, my tastes and likings. It has not been altogether an easy task, for I find it difficult to praise. The things one loves are not meant to be written about; perhaps they are not meant to be understood. They exist, it is obvious, to be enjoyed. Hence I turn with great relief to the task which will occupy me for the greater part of the remainder of this book, the task of enumerating the objects of my dislike. These in the modern world are sufficiently numerous, and I hope I may deal faithfully by them.

Like many modern people, I like to consider that my spiritual home is fifth-century Athens, or, more doubtfully, eighteenth-century France. I admire reason and the free movement of the mind. I like art that is measured and formal, and I think of the good life as an affair of playing games and scrambling over mountains as a relief from the rigours of intellectual effort. This last, I feel, should be the backbone of one's life, intellectual effort, and that playtime of the intellect which is conversation and discussion, provided they be abstract. By saying that they must be abstract, I mean that they must deal with matters on which agreement is impossible, and with problems of which the solution must remain unknown.

I am more interested in what people think than in what they do, and regard action only as an unimportant outcome of thought, the necessity for it being thrust upon us by the lowly plane we occupy in the evolutionary scale. For the race, it is obvious, is in its childhood; it craves material things and acts in order to obtain them. Yet material things, rightly considered, are only the toys of children. To grow up is to pass beyond the need to amuse oneself with toys, and to come to rest, like Shaw's Ancients, in the contemplation of changeless realities, such as truth, goodness, and beauty.

Meanwhile, the objects of my admiration are those who have

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best succeeded in embodying these changeless things in concrete form.

I consider Bach and Mozart, Plato and Buddha and Christ to be the best in the way of instruments that life in the process of its evolution has yet been able to devise; they are the world's greatest men, and Shaw and Wells, Einstein and Bertrand Russell among the greatest of living men.

FEARS

Indolence and Fear. The obligation to keep myself at as high a level of efficiency as, without too much hardship, I can decently manage, imposes upon me other endeavours and abstinences. I am involved, for example, in a perpetual struggle against slackness; I am in constant fear of taking life too easily. Given two alternative courses of action, I react automatically against my natural preference for the safer or less troublesome, and consider it my duty to choose the one which involves the greater risk or effort. I conceive it to be due to my self-respect not to take the line of least resistance.

In walking, for example, I never go round by the road, but always across country. Going across country usually involves walls, hedges, streams, and ditches, and the possibility of encounters with farmers or gamekeepers. Except when I am tired, I rather like the hedges and ditches, but, as I have said above, I object intensely to rows with farmers. Yet I should regard it as a form of shirking, if I refrained from trespassing when private property lay in my path. If this is a moral feeling, it operates in a contrary sense to that of the Victorians who, respecting private property, considered it to be wrong to trespass. Similarly, if the direct route lies over a mountain, I go over the mountain, or feel ashamed of myself if I don't.

An expression of the same attitude to life is my feeling of moral obligation to react against fear. Not, of course, when the fear is justified. I am a nervous little man anxious for a quiet life, and I should never dream of actually courting danger. But

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I like the sense of effort which I cultivate as a specific against slackness to be sharpened by the merest suggestion of danger. The suggestion is like a dressing to the salad. Thus, when I swim, I never go too far from shore; but I go just a little bit further than is compatible with a feeling of perfect security. I do not, you understand, take risks; but I think it as well that there should be just a moment when I can wonder fearfully whether I am not taking risks, even if I am able to assure myself a moment later that I am not.

It is the same fear of slackness, the dread of getting old and easy, that causes me in London to walk instead of taking a taxi, to dispense with an overcoat on cold days, and to change and play hockey instead of going to sleep in a chair on Sunday afternoons in winter. It also drives me to write.

ON WRITING

Why Men Write. Writing is the most arduous occupation I know. There is, in the first place, the manual labour involved. I am an abominable writer; my best and slowest writing is large, ugly, and laborious, and, when I write at anything like a reasonable speed, there are only two people alive who can decipher the marks that result. My fingers were not made to hold a pen, and after two or three pages of foolscap they tire badly; after a prolonged spell of writing a lump appears in the middle finger owing to the pressure of the wrongly held pen. Moreover, I cannot write a page without covering my hand with ink.

But the manual labour is as nothing to the mental labour involved, nor can the discomfort of the body be compared with that of the mind. The question is often debated whether writers ought to depend for their livelihood upon their earnings as writers. Cogent arguments can be brought forward on both sides. It is said that the only literary work worth doing is that which a man takes pleasure in doing, and that a man who writes because he must and not because he likes never writes

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what he likes. It is said, again, that great literature is the fruit of inspiration or of passionate conviction. A man's best work is that which has, so to speak, taken him up by the scruff of his literary neck and insisted upon his doing it, whether he would or no. Inspiration cannot be turned on like a tap, nor can we feel passionate conviction to order, while brains which are cudgelled for ideas become incapable of producing them spontaneously.

This is, no doubt, very largely true; the doctrine is well supported by tradition—there are, for instance, some pertinent remarks of Juvenal to the effect that Horace was full when he wrote his best odes, and that, had Virgil been poor, his Medusa's head would have lacked its snakes—and it is good common sense. Nevertheless, it is remarkable how much first-rate work has been turned out to keep the pot boiling. *Black Arrow*, for example, which is the best of Stevenson's romantic novels, was 'another Butcher Boy' written to pay the housekeeping bills.

A more important argument on the same side is that writing to live, one must produce a saleable article. Now, unless one's reputation is very high indeed, a saleable article may be defined as the sort of article an editor is prepared to buy. What an editor is prepared to buy is what will sell his paper; it is, that is to say, if he is a good editor, what the public wants, and the more he thinks the public wants it, the higher the price he will be willing to pay for it. But, if a man is a good writer, what the public wants to read is not what he wants to write; inevitably, since his value as a writer consists in his ability to advance and not merely to interpret the thought of his times. People like to see their prejudices reflected in print, and naturally resent those who challenge or flout them. Hence the ideas of the great writer are rarely acceptable to the man in the street, and, if he writes for money, he must tone down the uncompromising rigour of his original thought to the nearest approach to a saleable article he can manage. There is for this reason an element of prostitution in all writing for profit, and

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the great writer, who wishes to be a selling writer, must always to some extent compromise with his conscience. The mention of conscience reminds me that I have been straying badly from my original theme, and must get back to it as best I can. Luckily there is a short cut.

When all is said that can be said in favour of the view that a man should not write for his livelihood, there is, I think, one fatal objection to it. If writing were not practised as a profession, most of the world's literature, good as well as bad, would never have existed; for, if men wrote only when they pleased, most of them would never write at all. And this is not because writers are abnormally lazy, but because writing is such desperately hard work. It is desperately hard because it is always in some measure, however small, creative, and creative work takes more out of a man than anything else.

Toils of Writing. Writing is not one kind of work, but two. There is the business of thinking of what to say, and there is the business of saying it in the most appropriate way. And both are immensely difficult. It is difficult to think at all, difficult to make one's thoughts clear to oneself, more difficult still to make them clear to other people. Of most work it is true to say that once finished it is done with; but writing is never done with, for the writer can never feel without gross complacency that he might not have done it better, and to feel that, is to start tinkering in the hope of making it better. Most work, again, may be regarded in the light of a more or less complicated series of responses to stimuli. The responses are, admittedly, active not automatic; they are forms of reaction nevertheless. Whether it is letters that have to be answered, examination papers to be corrected, notes to be arranged, briefs to be prepared, cases to be diagnosed, problems to be solved, there is a concrete external something to set the organism going. This something is in the nature of an irritant, and stimulates the organism to remove the cause of irritation. But with writing it is not so. The writer must be his own stimulus, and evolve

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from within himself not only the energy and the effort but the subject-matter upon which they are to be expended. There are times, it is true, when something, it may be a book, a vivid experience, a sense of public outrage or private wrong demands to be written about so insistently that it takes the place of, if, indeed, it does not become, a response-conditioning stimulus. But normally this insistent call to write is absent, and the writer, sitting down to his desk, must undertake the double-task of conception and execution and fill the rôles of creator and craftsman in his own person. For this reason, I repeat, writing is the most arduous form of occupation I know. In my time I have been an examiner, a clerk, a teacher, and a lecturer, but I would sooner mark papers for four hours, dictate letters for three, or lecture for two, than write for one. I would sooner minute papers for six hours in an office than do an hour's creative writing at home.

As for other professions, the diagnosing of the diseases of the sick, the selling of goods to reluctant customers, the supervising of organizations or managing of businesses, the pleading of cases in court or of sermons in the pulpit, all these are child's play compared with writing. They are so much more sociable and amusing. Thus—and here my short cut has brought me back—writing constitutes for me the supreme instance of moral endeavour. It is only by adopting a series of devices that I ever get it done at all.

Dodges to Overcome Them. For example, I set myself to write for a definite time. 'Only half an hour!' I say to myself. 'You needn't write for more than half an hour', and, however tired I may be, however bankrupt of ideas, I feel pretty sure of my ability to keep going for half an hour. If at the end of the half-hour I find that I can still go on, I go on. I don't forbid myself more than the specified time; I only guarantee that I will work for not less. Usually I do manage more; custom and practice make it fairly easy to go on, once one has started. Very occasionally, and by God's grace, one may even go on because one

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wants to. But even so, it is very rarely that I write for more than an hour at a stretch.

Or I limit myself in point of space. 'Two foolscap pages you must do,' I say, 'and then you can stop.' And I do them. Often in a rush of enthusiasm and a glow of self-approval I exceed them. That is as it may be, but I should lose heavily in point of morale, if I did not cover my allotted two. And I am so afraid of this, that fear alone usually suffices to carry me through. When they are done, I enjoy a state of mind which may, I think, be not unreasonably compared with what the Victorians called 'virtuousness'. Writing is so burdensome in itself that the mere act of ceasing to write brings pleasure. In this respect it resembles the immersion of the body in cold water. Many people, I am convinced, bathe in the winter solely in order to enjoy the pleasure of having 'got it over'.

Or I set myself a definite job of work, as if I were attempting to answer a question in an examination paper, and contract with myself to see it through before doing something that I want to do. Much of my writing has been on philosophy and psychology, in which the discussion and criticism of other people's views play a large part. Accordingly I say to myself, 'Between tea and dinner you will summarize what Mr. X says about "reflexes". Between nine-fifteen and ten'—this with slightly greater relish—'you will begin to dispose of what Mr. X says, making points A and B'. Criticisms C and D are reserved for a train journey in the morning and a preliminary statement of my own view for half an hour in a wood on a walk the following day. And that is how I get it done.

Writing in this fashion, it is obvious that I do not consider myself an artist. No nonsense about inspiration for me! I am too humble, at least so I tell myself, to imagine that the winds of the creative spirit will ever blow through me, or that what I write at one time is likely to be much better, or, indeed, much worse, than what I write at another. And I don't suppose that it is.

'But this business of writing at all times, whether one wants

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to or not, must it not involve doing, when one is tired or stale, work which, had one waited, one could have done better?' Probably it does! Yet, I protest, it is only on condition that I make a moral duty of it that I can get any writing done at all.

And, if I am doing to order what at its best can only be done when the spirit moves, Trollope did the same. We may be very fine fellows nowadays, but few of us can write like Trollope, and what was good enough for him should be more than good enough for me. Besides, what right have I to suppose when I am flat and dull that I shall ever be any better? 'Anyway, if I don't do it now', I say, 'I might never do it at all. I know myself . . . and it is better not to take the risk.' Is this mock humility, or laziness, or impatience? Perhaps a little of all three.

CONSCIENCE AND ANIMALS

Virtuousness over Animals. In spite of what I have said to the contrary, I find on reflection that there is, after all, one set of circumstances in which I do experience moral conflict. I experience temptation, fight against it, suffer remorse if I succumb to it, and give way to complacency if I overcome it. But the circumstances are not those traditionally associated with moral endeavour. I have a horror of cruelty to animals. The feeling, no doubt, is virtuous and does me credit, but it is violent and irrational in its expression, and on the whole I am ashamed of it, or at least of my inability to control it. Freud, I dare say, would let fall a number of unpleasant observations as to its origin. . . . Still it is there, and I have to make the best of it. 'Mr. —, fish porter, of —, Bethnal Green, was fined £2 5s. yesterday before the — magistrates with the alternative of a week's imprisonment, for blinding a linnet with hot needles. Mr. — said in his defence that it was a custom to put out the eyes of the birds, as this increased the volume and sweetness of their singing.' When I read this sort of thing in the papers—and it appears often enough—I see red. My heart-beat gets faster, I hear the blood pulsing in my ears, I begin to

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sweat and I cannot sit still. I have an overpowering impulse to go and do something about it, and, as there is obviously nothing to do, I fidget aimlessly round the room. I cannot bear to go to the Zoo and I cannot endure the spectacle of performing animals. The existence of the Zoo seems to me to be an outrage in a civilized society. An eagle in a cage is a terrible sight, and the life-long imprisonment of lions and tigers equally degrading to prisoners and jailers. The Roman lions did at least have a Christian breakfast; the prisoners of the Zoo have only the myriad, merciless eyes of their secure captors, gazing, gazing, gazing until the flesh rots and the heart breaks in the respectable prison.

The practice of causing animals to do tricks in public is a device for making human beings behave like beasts, in order that they may induce beasts to behave like imbeciles. When Pavlov's famous experiments on conditioned reflexes were first widely discussed, it was pointed out that the principle which he claimed to have discovered had been practised for years by those engaged in training performing animals. Bears, for instance, whom it is proposed to teach to dance, are placed in a large copper beneath which a fire is lit. When the bottom of the copper becomes unbearably hot the bear can no longer stand still, and hops first on one foot and then on another, never standing on more than two feet at a time. This is called dancing. While the bear is 'dancing' a tune is played on a fiddle. The process is repeated on a number of occasions, until one day the fiddle is played without the hot copper. The bear dances as before, the conditioned reflex having been established.

The Burgundian Dog. When I read of such things I am horrified, shocked, furiously indignant, but not yet are the peculiar moral feelings which the Victorians knew. These occur when I am confronted in person with a case of cruel treatment of animals, or an indifference to their feelings. I am staying in a village in Burgundy and outside the butcher's there is a dog. He is a young dog, not much more than a puppy, and he is on a

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chain. I have never seen him off this chain. It is summer and the sun which is pretty hot beats down for eight or nine hours every day upon the square. The dog is unprovided with a kennel and has no protection from its rays. Also he has no water. A small block of wood is set against the wall upon which there is just room for the dog's four legs, and there for the most part he sits perched, jumping off the block when anybody approaches and beseeching them to infuse a little interest into the intolerable boredom of his life by taking notice of him. I would not say that he asks to be let off his chain; he has had too little experience of freedom to warrant his supposing that such joys are possible. Being off his chain is probably a sort of heaven to which he aspires and to which he thinks he may one day go, if he is very good—although not in this world, and not for a long time yet. But he would like to be talked to and does what he can to remind the world that he exists.

Since I have been in the village, I have gone every day to talk to this dog, and it is quite clear to me that I ought to do something about him. By the end of my visit, the weather growing hotter every day, the dog is on my mind. I talk to him three or four times a day, bring him water, and think about him at night before going to sleep. But I have done nothing to secure his release. Why not? Because I am afraid. If I ask in my halting French for the temporary release of the dog, my motives will certainly be misunderstood. Or rather, since no motive at all can be conceived for such a request, I shall be thought to be a little weak in the head, and the owner of the dog will stare at me with the hard curiosity that one bestows upon some strange natural phenomenon. A little crowd will gather to listen to the mad Englishman; probably they will laugh at me. In any event the request will almost certainly be refused, and I shall have to endure the humiliation of being stared at daily by a hostile and victorious butcher, coupled with the shame of knowing that I have done nothing to help the dog.

All these considerations and many more weigh with me. Why, then, do I not leave the matter alone? Because of my

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conscience! My conscience nags me continually, telling me that it is my duty to interfere and that I shall be a contemptible coward if I neglect my duty. And every day that passes finds me more humiliated, more ashamed of myself, more lacking in self-respect. I experience that lowering of moral tone which is historically recorded as the fate of those who struggle unsuccessfully against temptation. Presently I begin to suffer remorse. And so on the last day of my stay I go boldly up to the house and let the dog off his chain. He barks deliriously and jumps all over me. The woman of the house comes out and to her I expatiate upon the wickedness of keeping dogs on chains, calling her to witness his present happiness, and beseeching her not to chain him up again except at night. She looks dubious—the point of view has not, it is obvious, previously occurred to her—but is not unsympathetic. She does not even bring forward the usual arguments to the effect that the dog unchained will bite children, consume chickens, get run over by cars, disappear, fall a prey to thieves, get into any and every sort of mischief and fail to guard the house. After the first surprise is over, she nods and smiles at me pleasantly enough, even, I think, a little indulgently. And then I go away; I leave the village altogether never to return. Thus I do not see the future fate of the dog; I escape the humiliation of his probable speedy return to the chain. My conscience, you observe, is strong enough to compel me to make the protest, not strong enough to compel me to see it enforced.

The Marston Ferry Linnet. Outside a country inn at which I was having tea—the Marston Ferry Inn near Oxford—there was a linnet in a cage. It was a very small cage; the linnet had lived in it for about a year, and I had never heard it sing. I was told that it never sang much. My conscience beginning to work, I struck up a conversation with the odd man of the place and gradually brought it round to the linnet. He was a Mr. Pollyish sort of person, and among his multitudinous tasks was that of providing the bird with food and water. This he did with

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praiseworthy regularity, professing himself very fond of the linnet and anxious to do the best he could for it. 'Why then', I said, 'do you keep it in a cage?' 'Why not?' he asked. The bird had always been in a cage, since he caught it a year ago, and was, he said, quite happy there. How did he know that it was quite happy? Would *he* be happy confined in a small room? He admitted that he would not. 'Very well, then,' said I, 'admitting that it is very difficult for us to know what the bird feels, admitting even that it is just possible that it is happier where it is, I can't help thinking that it ought to be given the benefit of the doubt. But, after all, it is quite easy to put the matter to the test. Open the cage and let the linnet choose for itself. If it prefers its cage, it will stay where it is; if freedom, it will fly away.'

I went on in this strain for some time and finally persuaded the man, who was simple-minded to a degree, to make the experiment. So convinced was he of the happiness of the bird that he stoutly maintained that it would not take advantage of the opportunity of escape and had just mounted a chair to open the cage door, when the proprietor and his wife came out. It was some little time before they could understand what was taking place, and, when they did, they were very angry indeed. The linnet, they said, was a valuable bird; it sang very sweetly and, if let out, it would be pecked to death by the other birds. And then they began to abuse me for imposing on the simplicity of the odd man. Anybody could see, they said, that he was not 'all there', and I had no business to persuade him to do such a silly thing, which amounted to downright robbery. I bowed before the storm. I did not attempt to argue with them; I did not defend myself; I did not plead for the bird's liberty; I did not even offer to buy it; I turned tail and fled. My conscience was not equal to the task of compelling me to a second effort, and I went away thoroughly ashamed of myself for my failure to stand up for what I knew to be right. You are, I told myself, a child of your generation; there are few things about which you feel morally and feel strongly, few things of the rightness of which you are sufficiently convinced to be justified

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in imposing your views on others, and this is one of them. Yet, when it comes to the point, you are afraid to testify: you are hopelessly lacking in moral courage. And this, I suppose, is the truth of the matter. In regard to the few, the very few matters on which I feel morally at all, I am a moral coward. I am prepared to do what I think right, provided that it is not too difficult and that I do not meet with too much opposition. Otherwise I leave it undone.

The Magpie at the Inn. Or, I do it and am so ashamed of doing it that I do it in an underhand way and try to avoid the consequences. When this happens, most people would call my conduct morally blameworthy. For example, I stayed once at an inn where they kept a magpie in a large wooden cage suspended from the ceiling of the passage. The passage was dark in the daytime but lit with electric light at night, and the unshaded bulb shone right into the cage. Also people were always passing, and the passage was very noisy. A more unsuitable place for a bird could not well be imagined, and the magpie had been there for three years, during which he had not been more than half a dozen times, according to the landlady's computation, out of doors in the sunlight. The reason for this was that his cage had no top. It was a home-made affair, consisting only of a bottom and four sides, the ceiling of the passage supplying its roof. Hence, before it could be taken down, the bird must be caught or he would fly out of the top and be at large in the house. Catching the bird, suspended as he was high up above people's heads, was a troublesome affair, and the consequence was that the cage was hardly ever taken down. The magpie appeared to me to be wretched; his eye was dull, he was listless in his movements, and his whole attitude suggested a dreadful boredom. He seemed to wish to get away as far as possible from the people beneath, and from always straining upwards on his perch had rubbed a smooth, hollow patch in the ceiling with his head. I tried to speak to him several times, but he would take no notice of me. The thought of this magpie made

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me miserable, but the landlady to whom I spoke about him said that she was very attached to him, and could not think of letting him go.

And so one night I got out of bed, went downstairs, opened the window of the bar parlour, took down the bird's cage and let him out. I had previously ascertained that his wings were uncut, and there seemed to be no reason why he should not fly. And sure enough he did fly out of the bar window into the night, and that was the last I saw of him. In the morning there was a great fuss about the magpie, but I was too ashamed of what I had done to own to it, and, if the landlady suspected me, she did not say so. After I left I sent her a letter confessing my misdemeanour and a five-shilling postal order to compensate her for the bird.

But into what a hole-and-corner affair has the mighty Victorian conscience degenerated, that it should drive a man to such furtive steps!

BUSYNESS

Campaign against Boredom. What with writing and lecturing—I write on an average two books a year and in term-time give nine lectures a week, sometimes more—seeing editors, reviewing a couple of books a week, entertaining visitors, meeting old friends and attracting new ones, making the thousand and one contacts which are necessary to keep my mind fresh and bright, attending meetings and conferences, answering from ten to a dozen letters a day, playing games—chess and bridge, as well as tennis and a little vestigial hockey—keeping my eye on my children, making love, overeating and sleeping off its effects, I am pretty busy and on the whole succeed in keeping the enemy boredom at arm's length.

I have settled down to a middle-aged medium kind of existence, which finds in effort and endeavour the chief happiness of life, and bases itself on the maxim that the only way to avoid being miserable is not to have leisure enough to wonder whether

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you are happy or not. The defect of the method is an inability to rest. I never dare leave myself with nothing to do for fear of an attack of boredom, and, no doubt, I am wearing out very rapidly in consequence. I never go anywhere but I take a book, and I never pass a day without writing. To write in the morning after breakfast has for me become as habitual as . . . well, as a physiological function; perhaps it is a physiological function, and books should be regarded as the excrement of the brain.

I map out the day, often the week, in advance. Every hour, every moment must be occupied. And the occupation must be as varied as possible. If it is tennis from two to four to-day, it must be the cinema to-morrow; if I am going to a theatre to-night, I must dine out to-morrow and the next night spend quietly at home. If it is Miss X and a French lunch in Soho on Monday, it must be a party of men with beer and a steak on Tuesday. Thus my life consists of a series of tasks, engagements, and planned diversions. Most involve effort, most in one form or another require the exercise of my faculties at full stretch, demanding activity of intellect or application of will, speed of foot or quickness of eye, rapidity of decision or charm turned on tap-like for special purposes. I take even my periods of rest strenuously; I do not lounge in an arm-chair by the fire, or in a hammock on the lawn; I go to bed. In fact, I do not know how to rest; I can only sleep.

Industrious Automatism. I cannot at present even let myself read very much. Working in the bad old days of the Civil Service, when I could never bring myself to regard interviewing and drafting letters as real work, meant for me reading philosophy and writing it. I read and wrote like a galley slave to make myself a name to earn me an income when I left the Service. Always I said to myself, 'Once you are out of this, you will have time to read and write what you please; time, in fact, for real work'. But, now that I am out of it, I cannot shake off the habit of feverish industry I acquired in order to get out of it.

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Now that I have leisure for what I call work, that is reading, I find that I am restless with somebody else's books; I feel all the time that I should be writing myself, making money or fame, or contributing to the world's store of knowledge or enlightenment. I have, of course, to know what is going on in the world of letters, and I have developed in a high degree the capacity for knowing what is in a book without reading it.

I have, for example, a good reviewer's nose. It is with the sense of smell rather than with that of vision that the skilled reviewer acquaints himself with the contents of books; and, when my reviewing nose is working properly, I have only to smell a book to know what to say about it. I comfort myself for this slipshod attention to current literature with the reflection that a day will come when I shall be too old to write any more books, and then, I tell myself, I can read a few. Perhaps some of my own, for, as Samuel Butler pointed out, nobody can tell what one wants to read as well as one does oneself, and to write books while my powers are still with me in order that I may have something to read later on, is merely to make prudent literary provision for my old age.

In spite of, or, as I should prefer to say, because of all this activity and effort I enjoy myself well enough, and I attribute my happiness very largely to having seen through most of the great catches of life.

THE CATCHES OF LIFE

The Catches of Life. (1) *Love.* The great catches of life are the snares of youth, and, until one has found them out, one's life is bound to provide a surplus of pain over pleasure. The first catch is that love will last. Strong love, especially strong first love of the romantic kind is, as is well known, a most upsetting occurrence. Love inflames the passions, intoxicates the senses, clouds the judgement, destroys the perspective. It causes the loving male to endow the loved female not only with the desirability of a Venus, but with the virtues of a Madonna, the

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intelligence of an Athene, and the practical ability of a first-rate housewife, and assures him that in comparison with the possession of the person of this epitome of all the excellences, nothing in the world is of the slightest importance.

Finally, it assures the lover that his feelings are permanent. None of these beliefs is true, and all contribute to deepen the disillusionment which ensues when the hot fit passes; but none brings a disillusion quite so bitter as the discovery that it does pass. Love is the bait on the hook of life, whereby men and women are induced to take those steps which are necessary to the continuance of the species. Two people may be hopelessly and utterly incompatible; they may have no single taste in common and share no single preference or prejudice; they may belong to different classes or countries or races; they may be of different colours; they may hate one another in their hearts. Yet, once the bait so cunningly compounded of sexual attractiveness and sentimental romanticism is presented, the infatuated pair are no more free to refuse it than a starving dog is free to refuse a proffered bone. Once the bait is swallowed, there is no further need of love, and though kindness and affection may succeed, that is the best one can hope. Unappeased, love is a devouring hunger, a pain past all bearing. Fulfilled, it becomes its own parody, turns homely and dwindles at best into something small and gracious, at worst into something small and ugly. The shock of finding all this out is considerable but salutary. It has the effect of inoculation, and if repeated often enough, gradually confers immunity. Immunity means the exposure of the catch of love.

(2) *Ideals*. Another catch is the belief that what lies over the hill or beyond the horizon is better than what is on this side. The belief is instinctive and apparently ineradicable. Even when bitter experience has assured you that to-morrow is not better than to-day, the next town not better than the one in which you live, the second woman not better than the first, you continue to make experiments in the vain hope of improving the present by forcing the hand of the future, and bettering

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your lot by changing it. To inhibit this impulse is now so much second nature, that I no longer think that the view on the other side of the hill will be as good as I think it is. Yet I still think it is.

For this ever-renewed hope is, I take it, yet another of the carrots with which life draws us forward. That we should think and believe that what lies in front is better than what lies behind, that the future will be better than the past, is a necessary condition of our making those efforts which are necessary to forward the purpose of evolution. Once it was enough that living organisms should feel hunger. Now many human beings are too well nourished to need to make efforts to get food, and hope, or that organized system of hope's delusions known as Idealism, is the substitute for hunger. We must, it is clear, look forward with hope, despising the present in the interests of the future. There is nothing at the end of the road better than can be found beside it, although there would be an end to travelling did man believe it; and because man was made to travel, because he was contrived for the express purpose of carrying life to higher levels by the exercise of his faculties, the sharpening of his intelligence, and the strengthening of his will, no man does believe it—at any rate at first. With middle age the true character of hope as life's dodge to induce man to go on trying is understood, and, in the light of understanding, is exposed the catch of Idealism.

(3) *Beauty*. A third catch is that there is meaning in beauty. A young man sees a sunset and, unable to understand or to express the emotion that it rouses in him, concludes that it must be the gateway to a world that lies beyond. It is difficult for any of us in moments of intense aesthetic experience to resist the suggestion that we are catching a glimpse of a light that shines down to us from a different realm of existence, different and, because the experience is intensely moving, in some way higher. And, though the gleams blind and dazzle, yet do they convey a hint of a beauty and serenity greater than we have known or imagined. Greater too than we can describe; for language,

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which was invented to convey the meanings of this world, can not readily be fitted to the uses of another.

That all great art has this power of suggesting a world beyond is undeniable. In some moods Nature shares it. There is no sky in June so blue that it does not point forward to a bluer, no sunset so beautiful that it does not waken the vision of a greater beauty, a vision which passes before it is fully glimpsed, and in passing leaves an indefinable longing and regret. But, if this world is not merely a bad joke, life a vulgar flare amid the cool radiance of the stars, and existence an empty laugh braying across the mysteries; if these intimations of a something behind and beyond are not evil humours born of indigestion, or whimsies sent by the devil to mock and madden us, if, in a word, beauty means something, yet we must not seek to interpret the meaning. If we glimpse the unutterable, it is unwise to try to utter it, nor should we seek to invest with significance that which we cannot grasp. Beauty in terms of our human meanings is meaningless. It does not mean that the universe is good, that life has a purpose, that God is in heaven, or even that the human and the friendly condition and underlie the alien and the brutal. The lesson is a hard one, and the learning of it brings pain and disillusion. The Victorians for the most part never learnt it at all; they gave art human meanings and insisted that beauty must be symbolic. Thus they read moral homilies into Nature and moral abstractions, Faith, Hope, Charity, and so forth, into the curves of female figures. So far as pictures are concerned, our own age seems to have learnt better. Victorian symbolism is out of fashion, and I am glad to note that Burne-Jones's pictures of symbolical virtues and vices, hopes and aspirations, which used to fetch hundreds and even thousands of pounds, now sell at Sotheby's for five or six. Some of Sir Edwin Landseer's vast cartoons fail to evoke a bid. . . .

But we still look for meaning in life and above all for meaning in beauty, meaning that we can somehow relate to ourselves. We still judge the universe anthropomorphically and see

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in events portents of hope or menace to humanity. To realize that the preparation for eternal happiness of a certain number of human souls, conceived in the likeness of twentieth-century Nordic adults, is not the purpose for which creation travails, and that the moon does not ride the clouds on a summer night with any message for us, to realize, in a word, the vast indifference of the universe to man, is the beginning of the wisdom of an adult mind. Yet the realization means the exposure of another of life's catches, the catch of beauty. Until the exposure has been made, one is apt to be taken in by beauty as completely as one is taken in by love; by beauty, and, although this happens now less frequently than it once did, by religion. Love, beauty, and religion; undeniably they are important, and between them they confer upon human life such value as it has, but, if we would achieve happiness, we must be on our guard against taking them as other than they are; of taking them, that is to say, as signs of something beyond themselves, of reading between lines that are not there.

(4) *Pursuit of Pleasure.* And the final catch, the cunningest and hardest to expose, is the one that set me talking about catches in the first instance, the catch about pleasure. Pleasure, it seems, is not to be pursued directly. Pleasure is not itself a state, but an accompaniment of other states; not itself a process, but, like coke, a by-product of other processes; not an object, but a grace that attends activities directed to other objects. The road to happiness is not direct but roundabout, and, much as we may desire it, we may not go straight to what we desire. In this respect happiness is like beauty and sleep. Many people hold, though falsely, that there is nothing a man may not win, if he is sufficiently determined to win it. 'Where there is a will, there is a way,' they say, and, even though there be no way to the moon, for the common run of things the proverb contains its grain of truth. But with happiness it is not so.

The kingdom of happiness, like the kingdom of beauty, is not to be taken by storm, any more than it is to be purchased by dollars.

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Set out to seek happiness and it will elude you: throw yourself body and soul into your work, devote yourself to some cause, lift yourself up out of the selfish pit of vanity and desire, which is the self, by giving yourself to something which is greater than self, and on looking back you will find that you have been happy. Happiness, in short, is not a house that can be built by men's hands; it is a flower that surprises you, a song which you hear as you pass the hedge, rising suddenly and simply in the night and dying down again. For my part, I have found that happiness is bound up in some important way with the full development of every side of my nature. Such development is the fruit of unremitting activity and effort, and, since I have been and on the whole am happy, I had better end by giving the recipe which I have learned to follow, the creed by which I try to live.

from
THE TESTAMENT OF JOAD
(*written 1936*)



TAOISM

I have ventured to summarize this remarkable doctrine at some length primarily because it rings so many bells in my own consciousness. For my own life may be most conveniently described as a persistent and well-meaning attempt to maintain an official Confucianism perpetually frustrated by the irruptions of an unregenerate Taoism. I have, I consider, done my best to live a decent common-place sort of life, to behave like other people, and to keep up appearances. The world, I am afraid, will refuse to believe this. Nevertheless, I insist that it is true. I insist, that is to say, that I really have tried. For sixteen years I was a Civil Servant, and during that miserable period I tried very hard indeed. And, on the whole, I have failed. The Civil Service ultimately disgorged me; I was too alien a body even for that voracious maw to assimilate. For always, in spite of my best efforts to conform, there has, it appears, been something about me which was not quite as it should be. About my dress, for example. My evening dress shirt inevitably becomes unstudded in front; when I ride, my gaiters face the wrong way round, and when I play tennis I support my trousers with the wrong kind of belt. I am claiming no merit for these idiosyncrasies; I regret my oddness and do my best to keep it under. Moreover, I doubt if I am so very odd after all. There lurks, I suspect, a Taoist in every man's heart, only most men have been more successful in concealing his presence than I have. Further, I am not as odd as I was, at least not so ob-

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viciously odd. In these later years I have achieved a sort of working compromise between my Confucian and my Taoist self. But of this I shall speak later. My present concern is to describe the manner in which Taoism expresses itself in the life of a not untypical product of a highly standardized Confucian civilization; in fact, of myself.

DRESS

Sartorial Taoism. Let me begin with this matter of clothes. It is not, after all, true that in the matter of clothes I always do my best to conform. I do so only as a Confucian, and in my Taoist moments I revolt against my not very successful Confucianism. In my Taoist moments I prefer to look like a tramp. In this I often succeed. I go, let us say, to stay with friends, rich friends or grand friends, for a country week-end. I am the only guest who does not arrive in a car. Usually I have spent the best part of the day walking, not upon roads, but through woods and over fields. Perhaps I have sat under a hedge to eat my lunch or to look at the birds. I have no hat; my boots are muddy, and my clothes are only too often torn as the result of contact with barbed wire fences; for, now that I fatten and grow old, I can no longer negotiate these as easily as I used to do. Such is my appearance that although I am an invited guest, although, indeed, I may be 'starring' as a guest, I have on more than one occasion been arrested by startled servants on the threshold of the houses of the great, where I am proposing to stay; it has seemed to them the most obvious of precautions to shut the door in my face while they go to make inquiries.

Like most men, I have a definite preference for old and used clothes. Unlike them, I give it scope whenever I can. I am, I suspect, one of the few men on any University staff who, coming direct from the country, enters his lecture-room with a rucksack on his back and lectures in rough tweed coat, flannel trousers, and hobnailed boots. I belong to a broad-minded and

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Bohémian sort of club, and so far as I am concerned, it is, I must admit, a very long-suffering one. But its members always look askance at my rucksack and will never, I suspect, accuse themselves to my lack of a hat.

This sartorial intransigence is no doubt in part due to the ill-success of my efforts at conformity. For I began my life with the sartorial intentions and ideals of a good middle-class Englishman. I did my best, I really did, to dress properly and to look like other people, but with the best will in the world I made a mess of it. And my failure was a failure from the first. I took longer to learn to dress myself than any other child, past or present, of my acquaintance. When my mother first put me into trousers, my absurdly non-prehensile fingers tried desperately to grapple with the buttons—tried, and failed, often with the most disastrous results. For years I was unable to button my shirt collars, and when I came to dress clothes, something always seemed to go wrong with the studs in the shirt front. These studs were my special bugbear. Either they entered the stud-holes with a reluctance so stubborn that the shirt was ruined from the outset by the marks of my sweating fingers vainly endeavouring to coerce them, or else they lay so loosely in the stud-holes' embraces that they would escape from them altogether at the first opportunity, and leave my shirt gaping to the world's curious gaze. I could never tie an evening dress tie, and at an early stage succumbed to the seduction of the made-up ones which I concealed at the back of my drawer. At school I made a fool of myself whenever I was required to wear any kind of regulation dress.

How I became a Pacifist. Let me dwell for a moment upon my efforts to adapt myself to the uniform of the school O.T.C. My military career took place in the early days of the Officers' Training Corps—they were then known as Cadet Corps—and the khaki uniforms with which we were supplied were of a peculiarly coarse texture. From the stuff of the uniform harsh little hairs protruded and chafed the skin. At least, they chafed

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mine, particularly my legs, for puttees had not yet been provided for schoolboys, and we wore leather gaiters which, adhering tightly to the leg, pressed the trouser they encased hard upon the skin. So galling did I find this contact, that I was perpetually contriving devices for protecting my legs against the unrestricted incidence of the irksome khaki trousering. One day, in preparation for a long route march, I tore a number of advertisement pages from a back number of the *Sketch* and wound them round my legs underneath the galling khaki. I hoped that the pressure of the gaiters would hold the pages in place. For a time it did, but only for a time. Presently the paper began to slide down and after a few miles lengthening rolls of it began to protrude from the bottoms of my trouser-legs. There seemed no end to these lengths of paper. As ill-luck would have it, upon the pages thus exposed were advertisements of ladies' underwear and corsets. For hours I marched with this damaging display extending itself in an ever-lengthening trail from my feet. I cannot remember now what nameless vices, what unmentionable perversions, were laid to my charge, but I shall remember always the undying shame of those hours.

Incidents like this have, I suppose, given me what would now be described as a complex about dress. I am never quite comfortable when I am properly dressed, and perhaps for that reason I am never properly dressed. It is not that I consciously dress inappropriately. On the contrary, as I have said, I often say as hard as I can to look sartorially as other men look. So far as the general run of my dress is concerned, I may succeed. But always the effect is spoilt by some detail that has been overlooked. Something is missing which ought to be there, or something is there which ought not to be there. And, the grander my situation, the more uncomfortable I am apt to be. I am never, for example, entirely comfortable sitting on a properly turned out horse. It is, alas, so much smarter than I am, for I am only too likely to be without a hat, and, if I do happen to have gaiters, they will almost certainly be wrongly buttoned. I do my best to dress properly for tennis, but only too often find

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that my shoes are split and my socks grey. My evening dress shirts bunch, and, as I have already recorded, escape from their restraining-studs. With growing years and self-assurance, I no longer try as hard as I did. I even take a pleasure in my untidiness. I use it as an acid test of the sincerity of my acquaintances' esteem. If people don't like me well enough to consort with me in spite of my appearance, that, I say to myself, only proves to me that they don't like me very much, and I am better without them. Or, again, if I don't dress well enough for So-and-so, he need not invite me. This defiant flaunting of my untidiness sounds like bravado, but it is I suspect, more properly to be regarded as one of the safety-valves through which the steam of spiritual vagrancy blows itself off. Nor, I repeat, is it peculiar to me. Most men wear old clothes for choice, and it is not merely because they are more comfortable in them that they hasten at week-ends into flannel bags and sports coats.

COUNTRY HABITS OF OTHERS

Country Habits of my Contemporaries (Upper Class). I turn to a more important expression of my instinctive Taoism, my resortings to the country. You are, I know, protesting that it is not necessary to be a spiritual scallywag to like the country. I agree that it is not. But there are ways of liking, ways and ways, and I have never come across any which exactly resembles mine.

That his spiritual vagrancy should take a man often into the country is, I think, from the nature of things, obvious. For the joys of a country as opposed to an urban life are, as we have seen, explicitly praised by Taoism. But what sort of country life?

Most of my acquaintances go to the country in order that they may there, under slightly changed conditions, continue to live the life they live in the town. They drive down in a car to country house or hotel, take tea, lounge in the garden or play tennis, have a drink, change for dinner, play bridge or read the

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illustrated papers, and go to bed. On Sunday morning they get up late, lounge again in the garden or again play tennis. Or they go off somewhere in a car. . . . Many of them, indeed, are imbued by the curious belief that almost any place is better than the one in which they happen to be. As a consequence, they spend most of their week-end at a place in going off to other places in a car. For example, if they are staying at Cambridge, they will take the car to Royston, if at Oxford to Abingdon. If the week-end is being spent at a country house and they want to do the right thing, they may even go to church. This habit, incidentally, is growing. At midday there is a large disabling meal, desultory talk, and then sleep. Most of the guests have by this time exhausted the insides of one another's minds and have little to say at tea time, but fresh visitors are by now available, having motored down for tea. These give a fillip to the talk, which goes on brightly during strolls in the garden or perhaps during another ride in the car. Then dinner, more bridge and talk, and the week-end is over.

Now *that* emphatically is not what I mean by being in the country; nor do such pursuits entail even the beginnings of a love of it. Indeed, they are not the pursuits of spiritual vagrants at all. Which are? To answer, I must try to give some account of my own rural proceedings. For this I make no apology. The love of and the resort to the country are the most important and persistent things in my life; the country is also the chief safety-valve of my spiritual Taoism. The subject is, then, supremely relevant and I propose to do myself and it justice.

Country Habits of my Contemporaries (Cultivated Class). To begin with, I always endeavour to approach whatever place I may be visiting, whether farm house or 'digs' or country pub or the house of friends, on foot. I don't like being in the country, especially if it is new country, and in particular I don't like sleeping in it, unless I have first made my accommodation with it by introducing myself to it, as it were, and securing its tolerance of my presence. Now this I can most readily do by walking

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through it before arrival, preferably sweating and enduring a little on my walk, eating an apple or so or a few nuts from its trees, picking one or two flowers, lying a little on the grass or under a hedge, possibly finding a bird's nest or two, and having a drink in the local pub. To arrive in a car is to take the country by storm, raping it, as it were, before it has signified, or has had a chance of signifying its readiness to receive one. And, inevitably, from such a method of approach it withholds much of what it has to give. Health is perhaps vouchsafed to the body, but there is no refreshment or uplifting of the spirit.

My approach to the country, ill-dressed and on foot, sets the key of an attitude different from any that I have observed in my contemporaries. Of the treatment of the country by my unintelligent contemporaries I have already spoken. It is, broadly speaking, a treatment of studied neglect. The more intelligent of my contemporaries do not neglect the country; on the contrary they value it, but they value it as a background, a pleasant background, to the avocations of man. Their attitude, in fact, is that of the eighteenth century. They can, they find, do certain things in the country better than they can do them elsewhere; but they are not essentially different things from what they do elsewhere. For example, they go to the country to write, or to read, or to meditate, or to discuss important questions of private emotion or public weal with greater privacy and concentration than they could achieve in town. One such, having built himself a beautiful house climbing like an Italian villa up the slope of a hill, deliberately christened a certain path in his grounds 'The Statesman's Walk'. The path yields a magnificent view, one of the best anywhere known to me, over the Sussex weald to the South Downs, and he pictured himself and other eminent gentlemen pacing with measured footfall up and down the path, hands behind back and brows bent, discussing high affairs of State. The thought in his mind was, I imagine, that the amplitude of the view would give breadth and depth to the discussion and serenity to the discussers; but I don't suppose that he otherwise took it into account. It did not, I fancy,

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occur to him that it might put him and his fellow statesmen into perspective.

Other cultivated and intelligent persons of my acquaintance have made a cult of walking in the country. These were the forerunners of the modern 'hiker'. Brought up in the Stevenson-Hazlitt tradition, a tradition later enriched and embroidered by Chesterton and Belloc, they would set out on walking tours, drinking beer enthusiastically in pubs, religiously engaging the natives in conversation, and ritualistically eating ham and eggs for breakfast. This walking cult is, or was, strong enough to have enabled its devotees to set fashions in counties. Just before the War the Cotswolds were 'all the go'; one went there on reading parties from Oxford, and after one had 'gone down', one went and walked there with one's wife. After the War Sussex was discovered. To-day, Dorset is *de rigueur*; Dorset, it is said, is still unexploited, and its natives have been invested by the Powys brothers with a certain corrupt glamour, like the phosphorescent glow which may be seen to surround a decayed lobster in the dark. But even as I write, the sun of Essex is rising over the eastern horizon of the rurally-aspiring intellectual, unaccountably, since, lovely and mysterious as Essex is, it is emphatically not a county for walking.

The devotees of the cult of country walking have come of late years to include young women, hearty young women complete with rucksacks, hobnailed boots, and hot shiny faces, looking determinedly at maps and desperately anxious to do the right thing. These country walkers cover vast tracts of England, and after they have been on the roads for a little time, and sometimes before that, they can talk with detailed information about routes and villages and the peculiar features of this county and of that. But, for all that, they know very little about the country itself. From the very nature of the case they are passengers through it and not dwellers in it. They do not share in its pleasures; they do not follow its pursuits; and they do not establish with it that feeling of homely familiarity which is born of the intensive knowledge of one spot.

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Author's Progress in Rural Education. Like other good, young, literary men of my age I too started in this way. I roamed at large over the countryside, sleeping haphazard in pubs, digs, guest houses, and farm houses—there were no youth hostels then—and even, when I was very young indeed and the weather was fine, under haystacks. That, certainly, was the way to gain an acquaintance with England, superficial though I now see it to have been, and as I passed from one coloured county to another, I accumulated a store of memories of quiet and lovely places. As I grew older, however, I began to specialize. Certain counties sorted themselves out from the ruck, and I began to indulge myself in the pleasures of favouritism. Certain places came increasingly to be visited; others to be neglected. Finally there came a time when I wanted a place of my own, however modest, to which I would be content to go always, turning my back on the beauty of England as a whole in order that I might the better concentrate on the one loved spot. This tendency to specialization has in these latter years been accentuated by the growing difficulty of finding unspoilt country; so often has it happened that, going in search of beauty and quiet and the refreshment of the spirit which country sights and sounds alone can bring, I have come only upon some new spreading of the pink rash, the sounds of wireless and the hooting of cars.

Now the promiscuous country walkers seem to me to be more meritorious than the eighteenth-century country gentlemen, just as the eighteenth-century gentlemen are more meritorious than the road-house, or the country house week-enders. For the walkers are at least after their fashion making their escape from civilization, even if the form of escape is itself fashionable. But they are not for the most part making sacrifice on the altars of Taoism; they are not spiritual vagrants. Who, then, is the spiritual vagrant and by what signs shall we know him?

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COUNTRY HABITS AND TASTES OF AUTHOR

I can only answer, for the issues the question raises are highly personal—indeed, my whole conception of spiritual vagrancy may be a will-o'-the-wisp born of much reading about Chinese culture—by reverting to myself and to my own tastes. I have spoken already of my approach to the country. I turn now to the mode of my being in it.

Modes of Staying in the Country. When I am in the country, I like best to stay in a farm house. I like the stirring of the farm-yard; I like taking an occasional and inexpert hand in the work of the farm, and I like to hear the farm gossip. The life of the farm is as different as it can well be from the life of the town. For the farm is a little world of its own, and in it the doings of the world proper fall into their right perspective. One opens the paper in the morning to see what particular sort of a beast the world proper has been making of itself in one's absence, and, as one reads of wars and preparations for wars, of robbery and snobbery, of vanity and silliness and cruelty, one suddenly realizes that these things have ceased very much to matter. Quickly one falls into the mood in which one says to oneself, 'Even if the whole of London and everyone and everything in it were to disappear from the face of the earth, I shouldn't much mind; I should even be glad'.

In favour of farm houses is the fact that it is still possible in them to get local food, peas and beans from the garden, honey from the hives and cream.

After farms, I like to stay in inns or cottages. It is pleasant when you have been out all day, to sit in the bar and listen to the talk. But I have no wish now to join in it or to emulate the heartiness of those townsmen who bandy words and crack jokes with the landlord.

I like inns and cottages partly because they are dark. Light houses are now the fashion. The more windows, in fact, the

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better. Some of the dwellers in modern country houses built in the Jacobethan style are so glass-encased that they live with as little privacy as a goldfish. The sun, it is averred, is beneficial to the health, and light makes for cheerfulness: also, the residents are much addicted to views, and accordingly cut down the old trees which might have given their staring houses the dignity of a little concealment, the better to enjoy them.

Indoor Darkness and Outdoor Views. These notions seem to me to be 'towny' and of the town. At any rate they are not mine. The peasant who has been working all day in the fields has had light enough and to spare. The house is for him a shelter not a window, and, once he is in it, he wants to forget what is outside. I agree with the peasant. When I am in, I like to be in, and I like the little windows set in deep embrasures that let in so little light, and look out only upon cabbages and a hedge. A view is all very well in its way, but it is the least of all the good things that the country offers. It is no accident, then, that it is the one which the townsman most values. It is the motorist not the countryman who goes out of his way to look at a view for its own sake, and among the hordes of cars that gather at Newlands Corner or at Whiteways or on Hindhead, you will find no rustics, save such as may have been brought there parasitically in hope of gain. The first vision of a wide prospect, especially if it bursts suddenly upon you, is exhilarating, but you can no more go on looking at it than you can go on smelling a flower. For my part, I consider that a copse with a little stream running through it, or a meadow set with trees, or even a kitchen garden, are better worth looking at and living with than the grandest view in the world, and so I have no temptation to give up darkness, privacy, and the sense of being indoors, which one enjoys in cottages in exchange for a wide prospect; nor for it would I sacrifice a single tree.

Hotels and Country Houses. I avoid hotels. The ordinary, country hotel complete with A.A. and R.A.C. signs is a horror. It is

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not of the country at all but of the town, being, in fact, a little bit of town dumped down in the country. Its clients are townsmen—motorists usually, sitting, all liver and no legs, on cane chairs in the lounge and demanding drinks—its food is mass-produced and tin-disgorged—whoever heard of home-made jam, vegetables from the garden, or fruit or meat that was not imported from the colonies being served in one of these places?—and its charges are often outrageous—five or six shillings being the normal price for a tasteless, pretentious dinner. For my part, I would sooner eat bread and cheese and an onion in the bar parlours that still occasionally survive privily in the back parts of these places, than partake of the six-course dinner in the dining-room. The food at the back is at least honest, and the company, if it talks less, talks less foolishly.

I have much the same feelings about big country houses. I not infrequently stay at these, and sometimes I enjoy myself very much. I am a good talker and am found useful in the matter of keeping the conversation going at dinner; besides my name is just well enough known for some people, remote from the stir of things, to wish to treat me as a lion, albeit a little one. But I never feel comfortable in these great places, and never lose the sensation that I am somehow playing a part. Sooner or later I make some excuse for leaving the company of 'the quality' and start roaming round the back premises. I like talking to grooms and gardeners, and I derive inexpressible pleasure from being invited to tea in the housekeeper's room. Moreover, although with the quality I am talkative and confident, or at least contrive to appear so, in the housekeeper's room I am humble and respectful, as ready to receive the law from its owner as I am apt to lay it down to her master and mistress.

Parkland, Country Wild and Country Tame. I do not admire parks. No doubt the great stretches of green are very fine—certainly I have never seen their like in any other country—and old park trees are among the noblest things in nature. But

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there is a sameness about parks and an absence of detail. For what, after all, do they contain but trees and grass and those overrated animals, deer? And, unlike fields, which are individual and different, one stretch of parkland is hardly to be distinguished from another. I like country to be either wild or cultivated, and a park is neither.

On entering certain kinds of wild country, I have an instinctive feeling of home-coming. Let there be a valley in the foothills of an upland country; let it be strewn with great boulders, and through it let there be running a small stream; beside it grow bushes and little twisted trees; the ground is not very fertile, but, as the valley broadens, there are hedges and copses, and presently cultivated fields. And all along its length there is a profusion of wild life. Such a place I feel to be native to me, and when I come upon it, I have a sense of return. From it I feel I have at some time in the remote past been inexplicably parted; to it I hope one day in the not too remote future to come back, and for ever.

For cultivated land my feeling is different. Why, by the way, will people talk and poets write, as if the feelings Nature arouses in us were few, simple and, broadly speaking, the same? They are at least as various as those evoked by human beings. The emotions which I feel at the sight of ploughed fields and village lanes are as different from those which moorland evokes, as my feelings for a pretty girl are different from my interest in an amusing but elderly gourmet.

Now, if I were going to live permanently in the country, I should choose country that was cultivated. For one must make a distinction between the country that thrills and excites and the country which is for everyday use, just as one must make a distinction between the music that inflames and exalts and the music which is the necessary accompaniment of one's daily life. I can and do listen to Bach every day; he is what I call bread-and-butter music. But it is only on special occasions that I wish to hear the late Beethoven Sonatas. Similarly with the country. There is country for grand occasions and country for

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every day, and it is in cultivated country which is for every day, that, if I had to make a choice, I should live. For one thing, cultivated and not wild country offers the best and most varied walking. Through a farmyard, over a couple of fields, into a copse, down a lane, through a village and into a park—that is the kind of walk I like best. This mixed and varied country is the peculiar glory of southern England. Every hundred yards, the country has a new feel and flavour of its own, and like the courses of a perfectly chosen meal, each feel and each flavour enhances and is enhanced by what went before and what comes after. Now it is precisely the absence of any such individual feel and flavour that is the deficiency of parks—parks having, if I may be permitted to mix my metaphor, no bouquet and no after-taste.

Country Worked in and Country Played in. Why not? The question is not easy to answer without lapsing into animism. I have discovered, or rather—for I must not claim credit for a discovery that was in fact communicated to me by one more knowledgeable—it has been pointed out to me, and I immediately realized that the pointing out was but the bringing into my consciousness of something I had known all along, but had not the wit to realize that I knew, that no country except wild country can exert its full power to charm, to strengthen, and to refresh, unless it has first been mixed with the spirit of man. It must have been either worked in or played in continuously for many years, and of the two it is better that it should have been worked in. And equally, you cannot get out of the country all that it has the power to give, unless you too have mixed your spirit with it, working in it or playing in it; and again working is the better. The best thing of all, I imagine, is to sow, to plough, and to reap; the next best to plant and to tend trees, or to hedge and ditch; and the next best to attend to beasts. Walking, at any rate, is not enough. To garden is good, and it is the only one of these goods which is normally vouchsafed to the city dweller; but even among gardens a work garden, which is

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a vegetable garden, is better than a play garden, which is a flower one. And if he can do none of these things, yet would still savour the spirit of the country, then a man must play in it. But he must play at country things, at shooting, fishing, hunting, or bird's-nesting, not at tennis or golf, which are not pursuits of the country, but town games forcibly imposed upon the country like the houses of those that play them.

Tennis in particular closes the eyes and ears to country sights and sounds, and seals every spiritual sense. The raw, red gash of an *en-tout-cas* court in the surrounding green is a symbol of the breach that tennis makes in the country mood. You can get more good from the country by bird's-nesting for an afternoon over a couple of hundred yards of lane, than by walking twenty miles along roads and footpaths. The discovery of this fact was one of the reasons which led me to give up walking indiscriminately through the country and made me concentrate increasingly upon one or more known and loved areas. In general, any effort is good provided that in its exercise we are brought into physical contact with country things, earth, or vegetables, or plants, or trees. It was this same discovery which showed me what was wrong with parks and right with fields. Parks have not been worked in; fields have. For the same reason, there is a greater attraction and a richer atmosphere about a country cottage garden, with its rows of beans and cabbages, hollyhocks and canterbury bells, than can be found in the formal rose garden of the great house.

Official Recognition of Mysticism. That these things are so cannot, I think, be reasonably doubted; but why they are so is another matter. Officially, as I shall tell later,¹ I am a rationalist, or, at least, a near rationalist. That there is more in heaven and earth than rationalism recognizes, I am ready to admit. But this 'more', in so far as I am prepared to concede it, is, I conceive, of an austere and elevated nature; it consists for example, of goodness, truth, and beauty, and of the immutable

¹ See Footnote overleaf.

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entities, whatever they may be, with which higher mathematics is concerned. The future expansion of the human intelligence to which my official philosophy commits me—my speculations about telepathy on a later page may serve as an illustration of this official view²—will, I believe, reveal to our remote posterity larger areas of the universe than are at present known. And this extended cosmic area to be revealed to the human consciousness of the future will, I am led to suppose, be of the same general type as that into which the artists and mystics have already penetrated. For mystics, I hold, are biological sports on the spiritual plane, who, in virtue of their precocity are in receipt of advance intimations of those experiences which the deepened and quickened apprehension of posterity may make available to all human minds.

I say again, then, that there is probably more in the universe than rationalism admits. It may be that in listening to Bach fugues, to posthumous Beethoven quartets, or to the last twenty minutes of the Second Act of *Figaro*, or in reading Shakespeare's songs and sonnets, persons of even ordinary sensibility already make contact with this 'more'. But aesthetic experiences of this type, if, indeed, they have the significance which I am claiming for them, are, I repeat, austere, exalting, and elevated. They are a foretaste of what the human race may one day become, rather than a harking back to what it once was, and in any event the philosophy which suggests this view of them is, as I have said, official, expounded by me in works which, I hope, are no less austere and elevated than the kind of universe to which they point.³ At present spiritual vagrancy rather than official philosophy is my theme. I am trying to follow the unco-ordinated intimations of the spirit, not to sketch the systematized view which reason may take of the destiny of man and the nature of the universe. And as a spiritual

¹ and ². These discussions occur in later Chapters of *The Testament of Joad*.

³ e.g., my *Matter, Life and Value*, or the last half of *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science*.

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vagrant I have—I hope that the admission will not set the reader against me—feelings which are not austere, instincts which are not elevated. I can best describe them as unashamedly animistic.

Excursion into Animism. The nature gods, I feel, rather than think, are not dead. They abide still in certain kinds of country, and I know, or think I do, what kinds of country are inhabited by what kinds of gods. If I were dropped from an aeroplane in a parachute on a dark night, I should, I hope, know whether it was in down country, in river country, among mountains, or in one of those many tracts of dead country, whose spirit has evaporated under the embraces of too many lovers, for example, in one of the properties of the National Trust, that I had alighted. There are places on the Wiltshire downs, for instance, which are recognizably the homes of creatures of the faun, satyr or puck type, which, given their chance, would delight to bemuse and mislead, but would not actually harm the traveller. The Leys that lead up from Bablock-hythe to Cumnor are haunted by a quieter creature, stupid, bucolic, and kindly. There are places in the Lakes, particularly in the southern parts, where the big mountains become foothills that fall away to the sea, where the indwelling presences are loftier, more mysterious, more aloof.

Now parks, from this point of view, are lifeless, or nearly so. Not so, however, the cultivated country which surrounds villages, where men have worked for hundreds of years, and by much contact with the land have impregnated with their sweat and endeavour unseen companions, who in their turn have contributed something of their own nature—their calm, their quietness, and their patience—to the unwitting labourers. Hence the atmosphere of serenity and peace which still bathes the English country village, and the spiritual refreshment which the walker, coming direct from the town, may derive from the unemphatic beauty of cultivated land.

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Pursuits of the Vagrant. For my part, I find that the best way to make contact with these creatures, or rather with their spirit, for alas, I have never seen them, is to lapse into the completest emptiness of the spirit that I can compass. When I am alone and at large in the country, I try to make my mind a complete blank. I do not, that is to say, meditate great works, ponder the state of the world, or anxiously consider my own affairs. I think of nothing at all. I look at flowers, listen to birds, climb into the branches of trees, and mentally and spiritually 'play truant'. The concrete manifestations of mental and spiritual truancy are keeping off roads, avoiding people, and loping discursively across the country, through fields, into copses, and over gates; they are also lying under hedges, messing about with streams, and, the confession must be made, throwing an occasional stone at a rabbit or a sheep.

That spiritual vagrancy should entail trespassing, and trespassing for its own sake, is, I think, obvious. For the spiritual vagrant, when his mood is upon him, feels not merely indifferent but hostile to society. His is the mood of the boy who steals apples from the farmer's orchard matured and crystallized into a conscious attitude. He wants, though he could not explain why he wants, to do a little preying upon society. And so, whenever I can, I trespass.

God knows, there is not much difficulty in finding occasions for the exercise of my taste. Increasingly, since the coming of the 'hiker', the countryside of England is fenced and barred. In the north the moors are sacred to the preservation of grouse; upon all the woods of the south the hand of the keeper lies heavy. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with the one supreme purpose, the maximization of the number of fat birds to serve as targets for the ill-directed guns of stockbrokers. It would, then, be increasingly difficult to avoid trespassing, even if this were desired. But with me it is not desired. I enjoy the slight feeling of insecurity which the realization of being on forbidden ground brings. I used to like the actual encounters with keepers whom I could once outrun. Now I have to out-

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talk them, and the effort requires that I should summon to my aid the resources of an alert and sophisticated mind, which my ranging about the country has put to sleep. In the mood of spiritual vagrancy the intellect is in abeyance, and a trumpet call to the regiments of the mind shatters the mood. Nowadays, then, I avoid gamekeepers; but I continue to trespass. Apart altogether from the slightly malicious pleasure which in this mood one takes in being where one ought not to be, privately owned country is apt to be richer in those feels and flavours which I have just tried so badly and so anthropomorphically to describe. Inevitably, since it is less visited. Nature spirits, the friendly ones that dwell in England, like human beings provided that there are not too many of them, and provided that they are not all strangers. Like the little birds that fly along beside you when you walk down a lane, or the squirrel that peeps at you from behind a branch, nature spirits are curious about mankind, and thrive upon the connection. But if the humans are too many, come too often, or are too strange, the country is unable to assimilate them. The *genius loci* departs, the atmosphere evaporates, and the place loses its sovereign virtue. Hence the spiritual deadness of the properties of the National Trust, of woods owned by municipal bodies, of show parks and gardens and other places much visited by the public!

Myself and Hikers. With the invasion of the country by the town, entailing mass hiking, disgorged motorists, and parties in *chairs-à-bancs*, the number of these spiritually empty country places is growing. The sense of spiritual deadness on over-frequented mountain tops like Great Gable and Helvellyn, places that once owned a palpable atmosphere of their own, is particularly noticeable. They have, as it were, lost their tang.

Though I denounce cars, I am all for hiking and youth hostels. Our towns are an abomination, and the more people leave them, the better. It is to my mind wholly a good thing that hiking should have replaced beer as the shortest cut out of Manchester. Nevertheless, though I officially admire and sup-

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port this movement, my official attitude is once again at variance with my instinctive practice, for in practice I eschew the hikers and avoid the places where they go. This is not as yet difficult. These armies of young men and women who make their weekly sorties into the country are timid. Like guests, they are on their good behaviour, being desperately anxious to behave properly, not to offend farmers, not to frighten pheasants, not to leave open gates or to tread on growing crops. In my more exalted moods of spiritual vagrancy I have, from a lurking place behind a hedge, cocked snooks at a long line of them marching along some permitted, asphalted path. Officially, I am a Socialist and preach that the land should be owned by the people. But in the vagrant mood, when I enjoy the feeling of mixed lurking and larking that trespassing always engenders, I am delighted to think that there should still be private places where the many cannot follow or find me. I should hate to think that I could legally go anywhere, and I am half afraid that under Socialism I could.

Passage from Vagrant to Guest. Trespassing on the estate of some large country house in which I am invited to stay provides perhaps the most striking transition between the moods of the two philosophies, Taoism and Confucianism, which I began by trying to depict. I approach the house to which I am bidden as a guest after a day's walking in the country, perspiring, footsore, dirty, and tramp-like. And I approach it usually through its back parts, passing through a paddock, across an orchard, along a garden path, and so into the courtyard. And sometimes during my progress, when I am in the orchard, let us say, I am challenged by a gardener or a keeper and stopped. What on earth, I am asked, do I think I am doing in a private garden? According to my mood, I have cheeked, blustered, apologized, explained, or simply run away—run away, that is to say, out of the orchard, round to the front, across the lawn, on to the drive to ring the front-door bell. And as I have stood on the step waiting for the door to open, I have

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become transmogrified, not sartorially—that is to come later—but spiritually. No longer an anonymous vagrant with an outraged gardener at my heels, a challenge to the cursing and chivvyng of every underling, I am now a respectable personage. I am even a known ‘thinker’ preparing to add lustre to a week-end party, which I have been summoned to leaven with my putative brains. By the time I take my place at the tea-table, I am self-confident, knowledgeable, up-to-date, urbane, and the mood of twenty minutes since seems in retrospect to have belonged to a different person. Two hours later I appear, having bathed, in evening dress, and the metamorphosis is complete.

Catalogue of Likes and Dislikes. Snow, Darkness, and the Moon. I have become suddenly conscious of the length to which this disquisition upon the rural manifestations of spiritual vagrancy has led me. No doubt I can excuse myself by reminding the reader that the living of a country life and the following of country pursuits are two of the cardinal elements in Taoist doctrine, and I am anxious to show what a persistent determination to carry Taoism in its rural aspect into practice actually entails for a member of a machine-made civilization who is required to live in London. Still, when all allowance is made for the importance of the subject, I have, it must be admitted, been long enough in all conscience at the job—partly because it is the first time I have attempted it, and until one has said a thing often, one cannot learn to say it shortly, partly, perhaps, because until one starts to disembarass one’s mind upon a particular subject, one does not realize how much there is to come out—and I am anxious to draw to a conclusion. I propose, then, to complete the catalogue of my rural likes and dislikes as quickly as I may, and have done.

I dislike snow. The taste for it in nature seems to me to be a child’s taste. ‘How pretty everything looks,’ we say, after a fall of snow; and so it does to a first glance. But only to a first. The eye accustomed to the infinite variety of nature quickly tires of

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the unvarying white. Every variation of contour, every subtle nuance of shadow and colour is ironed out, for all the world as if the country had been put under a blanket.

For much the same reason I dislike the dark. Many people profess a great love of country walking by night: but I notice that they are usually townsmen. The country dweller is commonly too conscious of the hostile influence that emanates from the land, when the sun goes down. The familiar day-time presences depart, to be succeeded by others that know nothing of men. Even the most accustomed garden becomes alien and aloof when darkness falls. My great fear in the country—it has overcast many a waning winter afternoon—is to be caught from home in the dark. Long before there is any real danger of being benighted, I have quickened my walk to a run. Distraught and dripping with sweat, I rush up hill and down, blundering against gorse bushes, crashing through hedges, stumbling over roots, in my frantic eagerness to find one of those roads which in daytime I so sedulously avoid. Not to be able to see properly is a terrifying thing. When dusk falls, all my country confidence and assurance, my instinctive knowledge of where I am, my vaunted ability to find the way from anywhere to anywhere disappears as, hitting myself against obstacles and entangling myself with brambles, I struggle frantically to get home before the light goes. There are many who like to sleep under canvas; some even sleep under the sky. I admire their hardihood, but do not wish to emulate it. Moreover, I have noticed that it is the hardihood of the townsman. No countryman that I have known has ever dreamed of doing such a silly thing.

Since the invasion of the country by the towns, night walking has become a popular pursuit. Headed by an intrepid leader, parties of a dozen or more go tramping through the country hoping to see the sunrise. They may sometimes see the sunrise, but they see nothing else. For what can be duller than the country at night, if you are used to using your eyes in the daytime? If there is a moon, the night is no more tolerable. The moon goddess I find not merely indifferent, but inimical. The

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hard white glare that lies upon everything drains the countryside of friendliness no less than of colour. Lovers, it is said, like to walk in the moonlight, which they think is friendly to them; but in this belief they are mistaken. The moon is undoubtedly laughing at them, but the laughter is not kindly.

Country Weather. I like almost all weathers in the country, and more than any of them do I like their contrast. When I go to Switzerland or to the South of France and step out on to the station platform after a night in the train, the sky is a positive delight. It is so clear, so bright, so incredibly blue, with a clearness, a brightness, and a blueness such as in England we never or very rarely know. Indeed, it is often not blue at all, but purple. And then, as day succeeds day, with never a change in the sky which has always the same clearness, the same brightness, the same purplish blue, I find this unchanging ceiling monotonous. I long for variety, for the rapid changes of colour and shape to which I am accustomed, for clouds to obscure the brightness, for a haze to tone the blue, for the blurred, misty outlines that only the English sky can show. It is in England that the cloud artist produces his best effects, painting for our delight an ever-changing picture of shifting shapes, dun and brown and white and purple and grey, moving and dissolving across the background of intermittent blue.

On reflection, I admit to two, and only two, dislikeable kinds of English weather. The first is the east wind weather of early March. There are days—every year brings nearly a dozen of them—when the wind cuts like a knife, the sun glares palely down from a blue sky, and the pavements look as if they had been scoured into the whiteness of corruption. It is not the cold that I mind. I like cold. But I am no supporter of wind, and the east wind particularly at these times takes all the colour from things. The country is empty and lifeless; nothing is yet stirring, and the bright, brittle sunshine shows up its shabbiness. This, indeed, is the only time when the country is shabby. The dry leaves and the sparse old grass look their worst under

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the bright sky. There are no smells, no sounds, and no birds sing.

The other kind of weather, which I dislike even more, is apt to occur on days in late July, or in August. These are heavy, sultry days with thick, drifting clouds muffling the sky, as it were in wool, and a high, hot, stale wind. This wind blows unceasingly, sapping your energy, blighting your hopes, and producing a conviction that nothing is worth an effort. Fly in the face of this conviction, and you find yourself in a bath of enfeebling sweat. I suppose that there are many places in the world, tropical places, where the weather is more or less permanently like this, or is worse than this, and many people who adopt more or less permanently this attitude to life. I have only one comment: the expression of a heartfelt thankfulness that I live in England and a heartfelt complacency that I am not like 'many people'. For normally I enjoy my life and think most of the things I do worth while: in fact, I never play a game without feeling for the time being that to win it is the most important thing in the world. My normal pleasure in existence is the measure of my dislike for these unzestful days. No wonder that August, in any event a hateful month, given over to children and beach entertainments, produces the largest crop of suicides of any month in the year.

There are times when I find long summer evenings unutterably melancholy. They are bad enough in town; in the country they are often unbearable. In this respect daylight saving has definitely embittered my summers. That one should never be free from the challenge of out-of-doors, that, as a consequence, one should never feel justified in being in; that it should never be time to pull the curtains; that it should never be dark—these are things very wearing to the spirit. A fine summer evening is no doubt very well in its way; but like all beautiful things it constitutes a challenge, a challenge to 'do something about it'. And because there is nothing appropriate that one can do, because one cannot meet the challenge, one is restless and disquieted. How keenly at such times one longs for

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a short winter afternoon, the pulling of the curtains and the making of toast by a blazing fire. Winter, in any event, is the best time for the country. But the summer need not have been made worse than it naturally is by Mr. Willett's gratuitous prolongation.

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All my life, hitherto, I have enjoyed good health; I have also enjoyed my life. Justly, in my view, since it has been, I think, as active and as varied as those of most, so active and so varied that I have had little time or occasion to reflect upon such matters as pain and suffering and death, which form the subject-matter of the beliefs I described above. I have been too busy living and enjoying myself. For one thing, I have always felt and been very well; at least, I was very well until the summer of 1936, when, after having given me a good run for my money, the Lord proceeded to smite me. For several weeks I have been ill and in pain, and at the time of writing I do not know when I shall be better. And so it is that I have had occasion to give my personal attention to the matters about which I have been writing—to experience pain at first hand, to think about death as an event which might conceivably occur to myself, and to try to gauge the effects of suffering and misfortune upon my general beliefs with regard to the nature and purpose of things.

Taking them by and large, these remain—I cannot avoid a certain pride in the announcement—unaltered. I am in general unable to see why the presence of misfortune should be regarded as evidence of the good intentions of the purpose or Being which or who informs the universe; and I am in particular unable to understand why the occurrence of calamity should administer a fillip to people's faith, making them more vividly aware of, more reverently grateful towards, the beneficence of that purpose or Being. My reason tells me that calamity and suffering have no purpose whatever—they are, I believe, just part of the evil of the universe; and that the universe does con-

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tain real, objective evil, and that all attempts to explain it away, as being, for example, possessed of a certain disciplinary value, or as being the delusive appearance of what is fundamentally good, or as being the necessary counterpart and condition of good, are the most pitiable of the rationalizations by which men have endeavoured to impose their wishes upon their reasons, I am still, as I have always been, convinced. Whether there is or is not a purpose in things, I do not know, and it is my private conviction that nobody else knows any better than I do. We do not know (let us be frank about it) what is the purpose for which creation travails, why the stars run in their courses, what is the origin and nature of things, what is man's destiny in the future, or what his good in the present. And we do not know why there are pain and suffering. Thus the dictates of my reason. . . .

The Gods are Jealous. If, however, I listen to my instincts, they suggest to me broadly what their instincts suggested to the Greeks. There is not a God, but there are many gods—creatures of a human sort, though of more than human stature, and with an all-too-human attitude to ordinary mortals, in whose affairs they take the liveliest interest. Like Jehovah, they are jealous for their own power and dignity, and, like Him too, they become ferociously angry if they think that their power is being challenged or their dignity underrated. Hence they keep a wary eye for possible rivals, and regard with lively suspicion any signs or symptoms of mortals 'getting above themselves'—as, for example, by becoming too prosperous, enjoying too much happiness, or assuming too much power. If mortals are so ill-advised as to do these things, then the jealous gods are apt to take them down a peg, thus demonstrating their own power and conveying to arrogant men a salutary hint of their mortal impotence. And so, whenever things are going particularly well, it is advisable to be more than usually on your guard against the jealousy of the gods. It may even be good policy to buy it off with one or two voluntary humiliations—with, for

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example, the surrender of part of one's income, the temporary abasement of one's self towards those whose position is inferior to one's own, or even by a few good works. Such was the instinct of the Greeks—an instinct which expressed itself in the themes of the great dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles, which turn upon the tendency of man's overweening pride to bring down upon him the wrath of the jealous gods. Such too was the instinct of the Chinese, expressed in a hundred aphorisms and worked up into that philosophy of 'lurking', 'lying lōw', assuming humbleness, and aping stupidity of which I have already written; and such, when visited by misfortune, is my own instinct.

Pain as the Ultimate Evil. Having had some, I still believe that physical pain is an unmitigated evil, the greatest in the world. It does not, I find, strengthen the character, and it does not refine the spirit. In small amounts it makes men petulant and irritable, and if it is bad enough and sufficiently maintained—as, for example, by Inquisitors seeking to persuade heretics of the lovingkindness of God—it can destroy all semblance of humanity and reduce men to quivering wrecks of sensitive nerves and gibbering fear. I would beg any one of those who believe in the greater formidableness of mental pain to permit himself to be tied up naked to a post and jogged at carefully chosen spots and at nicely calculated intervals with a red-hot poker, and I would ask him to put his hand on his heart and assure me that he would not, after five minutes of the treatment, anxiously demand to be allowed to undergo any degree and quality of mental pain, provided only that the poker treatment should stop. Unfortunately, the millions of poor wretches who have been burnt and tortured to serve the ends of religion were rarely presented with so merciful a choice. For my part, I would be prepared to give grateful verbal assent to any proposition whatsoever, and even at a pinch do my best to believe in it, it by my profession of belief I could be released from physical pain.

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Christians have made light of the body in comparison with the soul. The body they have represented as a mere tabernacle of flesh, tying the soul to earth and retaining it in a kind of chrysalis condition of arrested development. Nothing, therefore, that happened to a body so conceived could be of much importance compared with the fate of the soul, and, if the pains of the former could purchase the salvation of the latter, then the pains should be welcomed. I cannot agree. Whether there is, in fact, a soul I do not know; but that I have a body I am only too well aware, and I am quite prepared to barter a promising future for the hypothetical former in exchange for a relief from the present and certain pain of the very real latter. But, though we do ill to despise the body, we may at least resent it—resent it for being a so much more efficient instrument of pain than of pleasure. For the performances of the body in the matter of pleasure are incomparably inferior to its performances in the matter of pain. The great drawback to all those theories of conduct which in one form or another make pleasure the end of life is pleasure's extreme transitoriness. With the best will in the world you simply cannot keep your pleasure up. Smell a flower, and the pleasure of the second sniff is less than that of the first. There is some nerve, I suppose, involved in the smelling which quickly tires; at any rate, the enjoyment is soon over. And so it is with all the pleasures of the body. What is familiar is no longer felt as a pleasure, with the result that the rich pleasure-seekers who exploit all the resources of civilization in the cause of bodily gratification find that the appetite for pleasure grows faster than the means of satisfying it.

With pain how different! It is not merely that the capacity for feeling pain does not tire with its continuance; it actually grows. For a time you do your best to hold out, calling upon your resources of energy and courage, or deliberately diverting the mind with some positive stimulus—by playing chess, let us say, or by writing. For a time you succeed. But there comes a moment when the pain breaks through the so carefully built-up

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defences. With a rush the barriers go down, and it has you at its mercy. Thus the capacity for pain grows with what it feeds on, and the torturee who, buoyed up with faith, withstands the torture nine times gives way to the same torture on the tenth. A churlish trick this, to have tied the spirit to a body so constructed that, though its capacity for pleasure is intermittent and transitory, its capacity for pain is developing and continuous. I cannot believe that a good God would have played it.

Ah, but pain, you will say, has a biological value; it is a danger signal; without it we should run risks against which it warns us. Risks of what? Presumably of death. But this is to excuse the greater evil because it warns us of the lesser. For, though I loathe and fear pain, I do not feel particularly afraid of death. I do not want to die; indeed, as I have already hinted, I enjoy my life. But I would far sooner die than suffer. That pain is an evil I know, for I have experienced it. Whether death be an evil I do not know, for I have not experienced it. Many of those who share most of the views just expressed feel an assurance that death is extinction. I think it possible, even probable, that they are right; but I cannot share their assurance. For what happens after death is unknown. Probably it is unknowable, and I prefer to bow to the unknowable instead of, like many Rationalists, cutting it dead. Hence I should wish my attitude to death to be that of Socrates. When his friends expressed surprise that he showed neither fear of death nor grief at its prospect, he pointed out that such emotions were irrational and, therefore, degrading to sensible men; for, since we do not know what happens to us after death, we do not know whether being dead is better or worse than being alive. Since it is as likely to be the former as the latter, joyful expectation is neither more nor less rational than fear. It is, therefore, the part of the wise man to feel neither the one nor the other, but with calmness and serenity to meet the unknown. As for praying to God when in misfortune, I will have none of it. I used once to try it when in a difficulty; but, finding God an ever absent help in time of trouble, I have given it up as a bad job.

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Justice is Done at Last. So much for the negative results of my illness. On cosmic questions it has not changed my opinions; it has not, that is to say, led me to postulate the existence of a creative God, to deduce that He is good, or to conclude that suffering is unimportant and death illusory. But disbelief in the existence of a benevolently interested and interfering deity does not entitle a man to claim credence for his opinions on matters of practical concern, and in regard to matters of practical concern illness has introduced me to certain phases of experience to whose importance I had until recently paid little attention, because, my body having hitherto behaved itself, they had remained outside my sphere of first-class interests. I have been led, in fact, to devote some attention to my relations with my fellowmen, which, being chiefly interested in ideas, events, and sensations, I have been apt hitherto to take rather for granted.

First, as to my friends. In the matter of visiting, my friends have behaved well. When I had been in bed for some seven weeks, I grew interested in the number of my visitors, and began to count them. Up to that time there had been sixty-eight. I was impressed; impressed and flattered. Presently, however, I began to be assailed by doubts. Had they really come for my pleasure, or for their own? Many, I was prepared to concede, had visited me from sheer kindness of heart. Others, came to give me good advice—advice which frequently took the form of admonition. ‘Here’, I can imagine them thinking to themselves, ‘is a man who has rather notoriously insisted on going his own way; on going it and on having it. He has broken the rules, flouted the conventions, ridden rough-shod over people’s feelings, snapped his fingers in the faces of the prudent and the worldly-wise; and hitherto, to the public outrage, he has got away with it. He has been physically active and vigorous and is good at games; he has a reasonable financial competence and is said to be lucky on the Stock Exchange; he has a certain name as a philosopher and a publicist, and his books achieve a degree of popularity; he is reputed to be successful with women; above all, he has enjoyed rude and abundant health. And now

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at last Nature has struck and he is brought low. How eminently right and proper! Justice has been done; arrogance punished; "uppishness" snubbed; the proprieties vindicated; the prudences justified. A man may break the rules and tempt Nature ninety and nine times and she will not turn a hair, but let him tempt her the hundredth and she will suddenly rise in revolt and drop on him like a load of bricks. She resisted a good deal of temptation before she decided to drop on this man, and now at last she has dropped "good and proper". High time too!

It is rarely that we are able to endure the misfortunes of our friends without fortitude, and my visitors were very brave with me indeed, for, reasoning unconsciously on the lines I have indicated, they felt in their hearts that justice had been done and they could not, I suspected, but feel glad that it had been done. And so their conversation was apt to take an admonitory turn—'If you had gone to bed earlier, you would not have been so ill'—'If you had not lived so hard, you would have had more resources with which to combat your disease'—'If you had not eaten such rich food, the disease would not have taken such a hold'—'If you had a trained nurse, you would be better looked after'—'On no account must you permit yourself to go out with a temperature'—'You will need to go away for a very long period of complete rest' (this envisaged removal of a competitor always gave great satisfaction) 'before you are fit to start work again' . . .

Ministrations of a Psycho-therapist. Sometimes, however, the admonitions were more specific. As my illness progressed, I was astonished to discover how many of my friends had private panaceas up their sleeves; how many knew of cures that were patent, cures that were certain, cures that apparently cured everything. Sober, sensible men, hard-headed and realistic, whose minds I had hitherto respected and whose intellectual toughness far exceeded my own, no sooner approached my bedside, than I became aware of a curious buzzing sound

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which appeared to proceed from the direction of their heads. Scarcely did they open their mouths, when out of them the bees came swarming, the bees of medical fads and dietetic whimsies.

Let me cite the case of my old friend A. Scarcely had the news that I was laid up reached him, when he descended upon me, and proceeded to tell me what was for my good. He lost no opportunity of impressing upon me the psychological origins of my malady. Admittedly, I was infected by a germ, but then we all harbour germs, all kinds of germs, and harbour them all the time. Why had this particular germ prevailed against me and prevailed at this particular moment? Answer, because my resistance was low. Why was my resistance low? Because of psychological strain and conflict, probably sexual in origin. But I was, I assured him, suffering from no particular strain or conflict, at least I knew of none. That, he pointed out, only made matters worse because my ignorance showed that the conflict and the cause of it had been repressed into the unconscious where, festering malignantly, they had gradually lowered my powers of resistance until they had made of my body a suitable harbourage for virulent germs. In the circumstances the only remedy was the thorough cleansing of my unconscious, involving the removal of the cause of the conflict. This could be most expeditiously effected by the ministrations of a psycho-therapist whom he promised to bring to call on me next time he came in the near future.

A duly returned, accompanied by X who was sympathetic and asked me a number of probing questions touching my relations with my parents in early infancy, the first occasion on which and the circumstances in which I had seen the private parts of (*a*) males and (*b*) females, how and when I came to know the facts concerning the bringing of babies into the world, my relations with my first nurse, and so on. My answers to these questions seemed to him to have a significance bordering on the sinister, and he sufficiently prevailed upon me to persuade me to go and visit him in his consulting room so soon as I was better.

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I have sombre memories of these visits. The psycho-therapist opened the door and without a word of welcome or even of recognition, ushered me into his room. (He was, as I subsequently discovered, obeying some rule which warns a therapist against establishing personal relations with his patient; the therapist must remain aloof and impersonal, like God.) He requested me to lie down on a couch, retired himself behind a screen and then bade me talk to him. 'What about?' I asked.

'What you are thinking about; whatever is in your mind.'

Usually I am not at a loss for conversation but this exhortation banished thought and dried up words. I could think of nothing to say.

'Tell me', he said, 'about your childhood.'

I told him all that I could remember; it was not much and it seemed to me appallingly dull. Then I described my father and mother and descanted on my friends. Then I fell back on what I had done that month, that week, that day. By the eighth visit I was so gravelled for fresh material that I was driven to recounting the numbers of all the buses I had seen on my way to the consulting room. Then I recited nursery rhymes. The eighth visit was my last. The strain of thinking of something that might be of interest to the psycho-therapist was altogether too much for me.

INTERCOURSE WITH A MYSTIC

The Author Meets a Mystic and Mounts a Hobby-Horse. I come now to the case of C who was solicitous for the welfare not of my body, but of my soul. C is a mystic, and a very formidable mystic too. He has an excessively noble appearance, a charming manner and considerable business competence. I first met C while staying at a Guest House in the country. We were the only two men in a houseful of women, and though C neither smoked nor drank, we fell naturally into talking together after meals. I shall not easily forget our first conversation. Its subject was the imminence of world war. I remember making the cus-

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tomary point that the next war will, from all accounts, put an end to our civilization altogether. From this I broadened out into a dissertation on the wickedness—or was it the folly?—of mankind, the volume of pain and evil in the world, some of it wilful, some of it apparently unescapable, and the impossibility of reconciling the facts as we know them with the supposition that an infinitely compassionate Being is watching over and guiding us, or even with the milder hypothesis, that some purpose not ourselves is working in and through us for good.

Pain, wretchedness, starvation, oppression, injustice, torture, lingering disease, and sudden death—these were the things, I insisted, that had made up the typical human life. Look backwards over history and you will find scarcely a period, however brief, when men have not been fighting and killing each other; when insecurity has not been the common human fear and grinding toil and bitter struggle the common human lot. Most of those who have lived have not had enough to eat, or to drink; they have had insufficient warmth and inadequate shelter, and have been the slaves or hirelings of those upon whose whim their own lives, and the lives of those whom they held dear, depended. We know only too well how capricious the whims of the powerful have been; how grossly men in power have abused their power. Even to-day, I concluded, most human lives would not bear contemplating. They were tired and boring lives weighed down by brutalizing toil, or dulled by monotonous routine relieved by trivial amusements; and, inevitably, they were lived without zest or gusto.

I cannot remember what C said in reply, but I know that it was singularly unconvincing. Indeed, in the argument that followed, I harried and pursued him all over the dialectical field and finally declared him intellectually bankrupt, palpably bereft of any device of reasoning or shred of information with which to comfort himself or to oppose the torrent of argument, fact, and invective with which I overwhelmed him.

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Unconvincingness of the Author. As I drew to a climax, I became aware of a curious feeling. It was not merely a feeling that I was not convincing my opponent—that, I am bound to confess, is an all-too-common experience of mine when I am, so far as I can see, handsomely winning an argument. More important and in the last degree surprising was the feeling that I was not convincing myself. These things that I was saying were all of them true and yet, meeting C's serene and untroubled gaze, I was suddenly made conscious that they were not the whole truth, that they were not even the part of truth that mattered. There was more in life than the misery and pain and wickedness upon which I had so gloatingly descanted. And 'the more' was of such infinitely greater importance that in perspective 'the troubles of our proud and angry dust' sank into insignificance; so much so that, if I read C's look aright, it was almost an error of taste to have mentioned them.

Presently C spoke. 'I do not', he said in effect, 'expect you to believe what I am going to say—how could you, when the evidence upon which it is based is hidden from you?—but I know for a fact, know it as certainly as I know that I am sitting here, that there will be no general European war on the scale of the last one, and that within a reasonably short time'—he was speaking at the end of April 1936—'the affairs of mankind will have taken a turn for the better.'

There is, C went on to affirm, a certain rhythm in the affairs of the Universe, and, in the light of his knowledge of this rhythm, he felt able confidently to predict that the forces of evil, which had had admittedly a long run for their money, were about to recede, the powers of good to advance. It was this anticipated early advance of the powers of good in the world which precluded the possibility of war.

I expressed gratification at the conclusion, but could not help confessing that I would feel greater confidence in it, if C would be so good as to enlighten me as to the nature of the evidence on which it was based. What, in fact, were his grounds for believing in a rhythm in the affairs of the Universe, in

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forces of evil, in powers and spirits of good, and in all the rest of his mystical paraphernalia? What justification indeed was there for this whole way of talking and thinking?

The Author Demands Instruction in Mysticism. C replied that he had access to sources of knowledge which were denied to the great majority of men and women. I must not, however, misinterpret him and jump to the conclusion that these sources of knowledge were denied to ordinary men, because they were ordinary; anyone who was prepared to subject himself to the necessary disciplines and to master the necessary technique could have access to them. Moreover, his feet would be set upon a way of life which was infinitely superior to that which most men were now living. Wasn't it then, he asked me, worth while making the effort to obtain this knowledge and to master this superior technique of life?

What, I wanted to know, did making the effort involve? It involved, I found, to begin with, the abandonment of smoking, of drinking, and of meat-eating. I jibbed at the outset. For my part, I said, it was not worth while; life was too short. How, indeed, could it be worth while for me to make these very real sacrifices, unless I shared C's faith, and since I could not share his faith, unless I had his knowledge, and since I could not have his knowledge, unless I had access to his sources, and since I could not have access to his sources, unless I had mastered his technique, and since I could not master his technique, unless I first made the necessary sacrifices, it seemed, I said, that I was enclosed within a vicious circle.

What is more, I went on, we are all of us, we wistfully agnostical intellectuals, enclosed within the same vicious circle. We are guideless and faithless, and would fain believe: yet no creed that can win the assent of our intellects is offered to us. And when we are told to suspend the operations of our critical intellects and to accept on faith what we cannot accept on evidence, we answer that we cannot accept anything on the basis of something that we have not got; that if, indeed, we had faith,

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our present difficulties would never have arisen, but that, unfortunately, the recipe for the generation of faith is unknown.

C Springs a Surprise. The dilemma is a real one and I put it to C as forcibly as I could. C, however, had a surprise in store for me, a double surprise. 'I know', he said, 'only too well what you are thinking. You are thinking that here is another woolly-minded mystic who lays claim to a kind of knowledge not attainable by the ordinary methods of the intellect, yet, when pressed for it, is unable to give any account of it or of himself; that it is easy, when one is beaten on the intellectual plane, to take refuge in dogmatic assertions based on evidence which is believed to be beyond the reach of the intellect; that those who are weak in the head are only too ready to cry sour grapes at the more rigorous faculties of the mind and, lacking reason, to decry reason's authority and to vaunt instead the claims of revelation and intuition. Mysticism, in fact, is the fool's last ditch.'

'Agreed,' said I. 'Most mystics I have met have been fools. For the very fact that it cannot give an account of itself at the bar of the intellect makes mysticism the prey of every crank and every quack who seeks to compensate for his palpable inferiority of common wit by claiming a superiority of private vision.'

'Well,' he conceded, 'I am quite prepared to believe that the alleged mystics you have met have afforded you good enough grounds for the low esteem in which you appear to hold them.'

'That such men exist, I know only too well, and I must try to show you that I am not one of them.'

'It may interest you to know that for twenty years I played match-chess in good circles. I played top board for North London, and there was even talk of trying me for England. I have more or less given the game up now—I have no time for match play—but I am still a pretty strong player. Well, I challenge you to a series of games, not for the mere glory of beating you, or the pleasure of demonstrating my superior strength,

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but in order that I may extort from you a sufficient meed of respect for my competence on the intellectual plane to induce you to pay some attention to my announcement that there is a plane beyond the intellect. You, it seems, only recognize the intellectual field. I challenge you, then, to meet me on it, and, when I have beaten you, I shall expect you to accept my guidance when I try to lead you out of and beyond it.'

C as a Chess Player. I am disposed to fancy myself as a chess player. When I was in my early twenties I played for a county, and for a long time after that I took part in match play for Civil Service teams. I have given up competitive chess for some years now—the games are too long and the company too dull—but I doubt if my ability as a player is much less than it was.

In the months that followed, and particularly during my illness, I played a number of games with C. It was apparent from the first that as a player he was in a different class from myself. It was not so much the fact that he beat me—although he did this regularly and with ease—as the style of play by means of which his victories were won that surprised me. While I relied on tactics, he was a master of strategy; while I sought for niggling advantages, he played for position and a 'mate'; while my policy was provisional and my methods empirical, he planned from the first a campaign which, through all the complications and involutions of development was not only inspired and sustained by a dominating purpose—the overpowering of the opponent—but embodied a consistently pursued, though infinitely adaptable, plan for the accomplishment of that purpose.

When a game was finished, he would play it through again, telling me at each point not only what moves he made—for my memory was sometimes at fault—and why he made them, but telling me also of the various alternative moves which had occurred to him, and the lines of development which he had envisaged as severally ensuing on the assumption that he had adopted these alternatives. He also explained to me what moves

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I should have made, had he in fact adopted one of these alternatives; and also, though with consummate tact, what I should have done, but did not in fact do, in reply to the moves which he actually did make. It was a display of virtuosity which delighted the intellect no less than it humbled the pride of the opponent, and I hope that my chess has been sensibly improved.

‘And now,’ said C in effect, ‘perhaps you will be prepared to listen to me on certain other subjects that lie between us.’

I had reached this point, when I fell ill. Inevitably, I called for C and he came. He was the best of sickroom visitors. He was very charming, he beat me well and often at chess, and he talked as always, about the country. But he was also admonitory. ‘This illness’, he said in effect, ‘has been sent to you for a purpose. The purpose is, in the first place, to give you a breathing space. You live your life at such high pressure that you never relax; you are so immersed in the things of this world, ideas and causes and writing and speaking and personal relations and playing games and eating good food and drinking good wine and trying to make your name and become a celebrity, that you have neither energy nor leisure to see beyond this world. You are so busy thinking, that you have no time to stop and think; so busy talking, that you have no time to listen. Now you have got to stop, you have got to listen, whether you like it or no. The machinery of your life has, for the time, stopped rotating, and, now that the wheels have ceased to whirl, you may perhaps be able to listen to something else. Normally, I assure you, you are like a man deafened—deafened by the stir and bustle of your own activity. Sit back, then, and be content to be quiet and to listen.’

I asked him what I was to listen for. ‘That’, he replied, ‘depends. Some would say, for the music of the spheres; but, perhaps, it would be better to drop what is, after all, only a metaphor and say that, after having given out for so long, you are now being given the chance to take in. In order that you may take in, you must make yourself as receptive as possible to the influences that are waiting to play upon you. For, if I am right

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in thinking that this illness has been sent to you for a purpose—and assuredly nothing happens purposelessly—then it provides you with a chance that you can on no account afford to miss. If you will but seize it, you may find that your whole outlook on life has been changed. You may see beyond this world to the reality which underlies it, and so come to view the things of this world in their proper perspective. Be grateful, then, and make the most of your chance.’ I asked him how I was to set about making the most of my chance. ‘First’, he said, ‘you must relax; relax physically, since physical relaxation will make it easier for you to relax your mind. You do not know how to relax your mind, and you must learn. At present, you are taut; even your muscles are taut. Now I, for instance, can relax in such a way that I can put myself to sleep in five minutes.’

Unregeneracy of the Author. This seemed to me to be a most enviable feat. What precisely, I asked, did he do? ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I begin by relaxing the muscles at the back of my neck. I let my neck swing loose like this,’ and he proceeded to give a demonstration. I tried to do the same, not very successfully, I am afraid, for I slept no better than before. I tried to listen to the music of the spheres, but I heard nothing out of the ordinary. I tried to make myself receptive to all the influences that were waiting to play upon me, but I only became the more conscious of my pain. The same fate attended all my efforts to improve and reorganize myself. I tried very hard to think that my illness had been sent for my benefit; that pain was doing me good; that I was being given a heaven-sent chance to discover myself and to discover heaven. But the only result was the persistence of the unregenerate reflections which I set down in earlier chapters. In spite of persisting unregeneracy, I am grateful to G. Of all my visitors I liked him, I think, the best. I still think that he possesses something that I do not, but would like to possess, and I am exceedingly sorry that my efforts to follow in his footsteps have so lamentably failed.

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AIDS TO AND BY-PRODUCTS OF ILLNESS

Alleged Advantages of a Well-Stocked Mind. I should like to place it on record that being a philosopher helped me, so far as I can see, not one iota to tolerate my misfortunes with equanimity. On the other hand, being a cultivated person did, for being a cultivated person means that you have habits of reading and writing, and of these the former, at least, is of great utility to the invalid. One of my doctors bade me thank my lucky stars that I had a well-stocked mind. Nobody, he said, succumbs so utterly to illness as the man whose mind is empty. I do not think that this was well put. The suggestion was, I imagine, that I was to feed on the resources of my own mind, and was fortunate in that these were plentiful. A lady put the point even more emphatically. 'If you are temporarily disabled', she wrote, 'you have such wonderful resources to draw upon. Think of all the people who can only do jig-saw puzzles; then think what you have got in the way of a mind to be ill with, like a river flowing and rushing from its source towards the sea of truth. There are still pools in it where you can look down and down and see fat, contemplative trout with their noses upstream and little jokes of minnows darting in and out, streaks of sunlight through the water, and down below great shadowy rocks of wisdom and knowledge. All for you to enjoy.'

Well, well! It is, of course, possible that my mind is like that, but I doubt it. I would not, however, be prepared certainly to affirm that it is not, since I have hardly ever taken stock of it, or considered whether it is a pool of wisdom, or whether, as I hope and think, it serves merely as an instrument for obtaining information and then reflecting upon it. I am not by nature given to introspection. I rarely look within, and, when I do, am so frightened by what I see there, that I look outside again as quickly as I can. Hence the suggestion that I should feed on my own stores of internal nourishment was one of the most unfortunate of all those that were made to me. For to be thrown

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helpless on the resources of my own mind is, for me, to be thrown into a stagnant pool, where I lie muddy, bored, and miserable until some nice, bright little happening, a shaft of sunlight with motes in it, the sight of a pretty face, the receipt of a flattering letter, the most artless of compliments, or a good dinner, come to rescue me from myself. Enough, then, of the alleged resources of my mind.

Gratitude to Literature. I was, however, grateful to the habit of reading, and more grateful still when the well-known itch came back to my fingers to set me writing, which I presently began to do in the teeth of every sort of obstacle—with a hand too weak to hold a pen for more than five minutes at a time; with a head throbbing with aches, and a body pulsing with pain; interrupted by doctors with long faces and nurses with artificially cheerful ones; distracted by medicines, washings, poultices, bandages; incommoded by lack of desk or table, by gross incompetence in the management of substitute bed-rests and bed-desks, and a complete inability, when lying propped on an elbow, to produce marks on the paper whose meaning even I could afterwards decipher. In spite of all these things, I went on doggedly writing. Heroism? Not at all; only restlessness coupled with an inability to break habits.

As for reading, why does everybody suppose that, just because a man is ill, his brains become addled and he develops a taste for garbage? I do not know. Yet I put it on record that from the moment my illness became known to my friends, the house became a target for bombardment by the class of literature known as 'bloods'. A 'blood' is a story about crime. Its strength, such as it is, lies in horror and excitement, and it is usually abominably written. Some detective stories qualify as 'bloods'. The detective stories of Freeman Wills Croft I enjoy. They are distinguished by an intellectual precision and an austerity of argument of which a logician might well be proud. But for the rest, this stream of hog-wash that poured into my library, adorned for the most part with blooming jackets upon

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which girls struggled in the grip of clutching fingers, trembled before Chinamen, or writhed in the coils of snakes, was felt by me to be such an insult to the literary and philosophical inmates who normally have their home there, that I caused it to be diverted through a pipe into a wheelbarrow, where it was taken to the garden and suitably burnt—I have spoken of it as hog-wash and described it in similes appropriate to fluid, but I have no compunction at all in mixing my metaphors and telling you that it burnt, for so flamboyant was it that it nearly set fire to itself—under my personal inspection from the library window. The library having been purified, I proceeded contentedly to read George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Dickens, and Trollope.

Admirableness of Author's Life. For the rest, being neither philosophic, nor patient, nor able to relax, nor capable apparently of attending to the music of the spheres, nor receptive to invisible influences, I spent my time longing to be well. I longed to be well with a passionate intensity which put every other feeling out of court. It is said that some people enjoy being ill, and pretend to illnesses they have not got in order to attract attention to themselves. Presently they come, in good earnest, to have the illnesses that they think they have but have not, by dint of thinking that they have them. My only comment is, how dull and boring the lives of these people must be that they should be prepared voluntarily to forgo the ardours and pleasures of living in order that they may lie in bed. How little attention they must normally receive, if it is worth their while to be ill in order that they may receive more!

For my part, as I lay helpless, and the everyday activities of my normal, healthy life passed before me in a row of pictures, flitting across a brightly lit screen, I could not help but reflect how infinitely varied, amusing, attractive, entertaining, instructive, elevating, and useful the pictures appeared. Music and nature, long walks in the country, dining pleasantly with women at little restaurants, exchanging ideas with men like-

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minded with myself, lecturing, orating to audiences, sitting up half the night to work, playing tennis, playing chess, and playing bridge, going to Paris to eat and drink, picking flowers in spring and mushrooms in autumn, bathing in coves in summer, riding horses in winter—what fun it all seemed, and how I longed to be restored to it.

Moral Obliquity of Illness. This passionate longing to be well, although the chief, was not the only psychological concomitant of my illness. You cannot, for the first time in your life at middle age, lie in bed helpless and in pain for two or three months without undergoing some change. The changes in my case seemed little enough. Indeed, in the sphere of belief, as I have already tried to explain, they were so small as to be non-existent. But what of my character? It deteriorated, I think—not much, but a little. For example, I became more temperamental. My first impulse on feeling ill is to lurk; that is to say, I first pretend that nothing is the matter with me, hoping that the feeling will pass, and, then if it does not pass, I shut myself away somewhere, until it does. This impulse to shut myself away was in its origin quite unthinking. It is the impulse of the wounded animal. Since, however, I reached maturity, it has been reinforced by a belief for which, if challenged, I can produce so little evidence that I must suppose it to be little more than a rationalization of the impulse. The belief is Samuel Butler's, that physical illness is morally wicked. Butler's readers will remember how the Erewhonians talked openly of their addiction to theft, appealed for sympathy because they had forged a cheque, and, when suffering from fits of bad temper, called in the family 'straightener' to correct them. But when disease was afoot, they lowered their voices and averted their eyes. They shrank from the discussion of illness as the height of indelicacy, hid themselves away at the slightest suggestion of a cold, and carefully guarded themselves against any hint of their disgrace reaching the ears of their friends.

My instinct is that of the Erewhonians. Unsympathetic to

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illness in others—I am so impatient of it in my own household that its members are driven to disguise their symptoms for fear of provoking my derisive and embittered comments—I am thoroughly ashamed of it in myself. I pretend to myself that I am well, go on going about my business, and run grave risks of making myself worse by my refusal to take to my bed. When I do take to it, I do so privily, hoping I may get better before anybody finds me out. And in bed I lurk till my troubles grow too great to be borne any longer, whereupon I begin to bleat pitifully for succour and compassion. Upon those who are prepared to administer them, I become totally dependent. In fact, once my defences are down, the completeness of my surrender is proportional to the stoutness of my previous resistance, and my dependence on others is absolute. But for the fact that it is absolute, I can never quite forgive them. I can never quite get over my feeling of grievance against them for having seen me brought low, resenting their knowledge of my weakness as the criminal resents the observation of his crime.

The Author becomes Temperamental. Now this resentment persists through, and in spite of, my dependence and produces a disconcerting changeableness of mood. At one moment, I am all gratitude; I realize and appreciate the self-denying devotion which is being lavished upon me, and I am shamed by my own feeling of unworthiness. At the next, I am growling with resentment at my dependence, and snap like a wounded dog at the hand that seeks to bind it. This oscillation between gratitude and surliness makes me a singularly difficult invalid. Like most people, I am made irritable and crotchety by pain—by pain, that is to say, in small doses, for, as I have already pointed out, great pain produces not an irritable human being, but a quivering mass of tortured nerves and flesh which, as the pain grows, loses all title to humanity. But in my case the natural ill-temper of the sick man, pestered by his aching body, is exacerbated by the resentfulness born of my feeling of guilt.

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Apart from the capriciousness of mood which this feeling of guilt engenders, when ill I am, in general, weak and womanish. My will power is sapped, and my rationality diminished.

The Author's Programme for Living. Normally, I try to plan my life as a whole. I try, that is to say, taking as my unit a period of some days or even weeks, to engage during that period in as many of those activities which I consider to be good in themselves as I can contrive to introduce. These activities are broadly those connected with the pursuit of truth; the increase of fame; the enjoyment of beauty; and the experiencing of intrinsically pleasant sensations. I ought perhaps to add—I wish I were in a position to add—activities devoted to the pursuit and increase of moral virtue, since I consider moral virtue to be an end in itself; but since, unfortunately, I have never discovered the recipe for its engendering, at any rate in myself, I am constrained to omit increase in moral virtue from my programme of activities. I would like to cultivate virtue and to be a better man, but I simply do not know how to do it.

The carrying out of this long-term plan of living involves a certain amount of self-discipline. Always to keep an eye on the future means often to deny oneself in the present. A number of immediately obvious attractions have to be resisted, a few ardours and endurances to be faced. The execution of the plan entails, for example, working for six or seven hours every day since I have not, I find, the wit to keep myself amused except for comparatively short periods, and have discovered that work is the only kind of activity that I can tolerate in all but the very smallest doses. It entails not seeing many of the people who want to see me, and insisting, even at the cost of considerable personal inconvenience, on seeing the people that I want to see, however little they may want to see me. It entails spacing my theatres, cinemas, and concerts so that there is never more than one of them in any one week; allotting to myself a certain allowance of country sights and sounds and resisting in the interests of my allowance all temptations to stay in town, and

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restricting my gluttonous pleasure in food and drink to the enjoyment of one good meal a day.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Long-Term Planning. The wise man never acts, says Aristotle, save on a balance of considerations. I agree. What is more, I have found it advisable to include among the considerations which are relevant to the performance of particular actions, an advance survey of the actions I am likely to be performing a week, or even a fortnight, hence. The disadvantages of this course are obvious. The attitude of the long-term planner is, for example, open to criticism on the score of being cold and calculating. He can rarely, it must be conceded, permit himself to act upon impulse, and there is inevitably, therefore, a certain absence of zest and gusto in his activities. He can rarely, for example, see a friend when the impulse takes him. His time-table for that day, and for many following days, is already full and he must make a date three weeks hence. Now in three weeks' time the impulse to see his friend may have faded, and the spontaneous pleasure of indulging an impulse becomes the savourless obligation to perform a duty.

Nevertheless, however censurable in youth, the long-term attitude is on balance the most appropriate in middle age. Unless he is a complete fool, the middle-aged man will have learnt by experience what are the things that he really wants and likes. And if to include in his life as many of the things that he really wants and likes as possible involves a certain amount of long-term planning and denial of satisfaction to the impulses of the moment, he must put up with the planning and denial as best he can. For this, after all, he will say to himself philosophically, is what life in London in the twentieth century entails. It is only in heaven that one can do what one wants to do without prejudice to the other things that one wants to do. And so I have learnt to school myself with a reasonable amount of success to resist temptations to indulge immediate impulses in the interests of maximum satisfaction over a long-term period.

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The schooling involves the constant exercise of will and the no less constant activity of the practical reason. It was this schooling with its resultant disciplines and restraints, so hardly acquired, so carefully observed, that, I found, was undermined by illness.

Sapping of Author's Will Power. Take, for instance, the case of the will. Continually I found myself unable to resist those minor temptations against which in health I am proof. I would invite to see me anyone who wanted to come and, broadly speaking, when they wanted to come. The result was a surfeit of bores and a dearth of charmers. The uninteresting came often and, clashing with the interesting, frightened them away.

There are no such difficult social situations as those that occur at the bed-sides of the sick. People belonging to different classes, people with different political opinions, people who were known personal enemies, people without a taste or interest in common, country cousins, and smart townees, met at my bed-side and had somehow to be managed. The resultant social *contretemps* are very hard upon the sick who, inevitably diminished in respect of their social competence, are further rendered miserable by their inability to cope with situations that so obviously require management. Over and over again, I was left drained and exhausted by the clash of jarring personalities, simply because I could not resist the temptation of volunteered visits by friends of all sorts and conditions.

As a fattening middle-aged man, I normally exercise some control over my diet. So much so that, as I have already explained, my gluttony is constrained to do the best it can for itself on the basis of one good meal a day. As a sick man, I was permitted to eat what I pleased; but wine was denied me. Perhaps it was to make up for the absence of wine that I fell so wildly and so indiscriminately upon my food. I consumed cocoa, chocolate, chops, and pastry and, being deprived of my usual allowance of exercise, put on flesh at an alarming rate. Ordinarily, I try to do exercises to keep myself fit, although the per-

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formance, at the best of times, is, I admit, half-hearted. To do exercises alone in one's bedroom and in cold blood is a dour, flat-footed sort of proceeding. As a general rule, I should say that it is only those who are fit enough to have no need of exercises who possess the will-power requisite for their performance, while those who need them, just because they do need them, lack the necessary resolution. I have seriously studied my Hornibrook, and endured the belly-presses and other bodily rigours recommended by that admirable cultivator of the abdomen, for a few weeks, or even months, at a time. But I have never been able to keep them up. As an ill man, I lost even the power to do such exercises as were possible, such as breathing exercises, voice-production exercises, and anti-lisping exercises.

My reading, again, was indefensibly self-indulgent. Normally, I permit myself a scheduled allowance of books that I really like, such as Victorian novels, reading them in due proportion to the books that I must review and the books that I must read in order to keep up to date. When ill, I ceased reviewing, omitted to keep up to date, and battered shamelessly upon Dickens, Hardy, George Eliot, Trollope, Jane Austen, and H. G. Wells. I grew sentimental, too, and lacked the will-power to resist charitable appeals from the poor and requests for the loan of books from those who, I knew, would never return them. I even, with some dim hope of propitiating the deities, my doctors, contributed to the funds of a hospital. Pavlov's dogs, it will be remembered, forgot all their carefully built-up inhibitions and salivated indiscriminately when out of sorts or distracted by strangers.

Rationality Diminished. As with my will, so with my reason. The planned attitude to life which I have sketched requires that one should continually be taking into account considerations which are not immediately relevant. The willingness and ability to take into account not immediately relevant considerations constitute, in my view, the essence of rationality. Animals respond only to the stimulus of the moment; savages think

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only of the neighbours, the tribe, and the gods; women and uneducated persons of the neighbours and the family. The reasonable man is he who perpetually keeps in mind all the interests, needs, and affections of his life, however remote they may be from the circumstances pressing upon him at the moment. Even when he consents to live in that moment, he continues to take thought for the morrow. I have made some little progress in the art of being reasonable and, as I have explained, try never to act save on a balance of considerations.

When ill, I shamelessly indulged the impulse of the moment. Whatever offered itself to me as being immediately attractive, that I did, without reference to its consequences or its relation to other things not immediately practicable which I considered to be equally or more attractive.

When at last I began to get better, this bad habit persisted. I accepted every invitation to address societies with or without payment, and to spend week-ends with or without bores. I consented to see whoever proposed to call; I agreed to go walking or riding with whomsoever was willing to accompany me. I even acceded to the suggestions of whatever publishers chose to make me offers, irrespective of whether I wanted, or was able, to write the books they proposed. And a fine mess of things I made in consequence. For months my energies were devoted to getting out of the scrapes into which the unreflecting ebullience of illness had landed me, and to contracting, how expensively, out of the arrangements to which my moments of febrile expansiveness had committed me.

The Author's Admirableness. Cross, irritable, temperamental, moody, weak-willed, self-indulgent, irrational, alternately crawling with gratitude and surly with resentment, I do not imagine that as an invalid I have cut a very pretty figure. That the reader may not form too gloomy an impression of the author, and in the hope of softening his displeasure and mitigating his contempt I add two postscripts.

First, I propose to make a bid for his admiration.

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When I was ill, most of the pleasures of life were denied to me; wine and women, tennis and golf, country walks and country pursuits. I could not move, write, play games, make love, or drink wine; for a time I could not even read. As I lay helpless, there flitted before my mind the brightly lit panorama of my ordinary life seeming, as I have described, so varied, so enjoyable, so infinitely worth while. What was the vision of lost joys that chiefly haunted me? The vision of drinking, of making love, of going to parties, of addressing audiences, or of playing games? Not at all. It was the vision of walking by myself in the country. Should I ever, I asked myself, again climb a hill, push my way through a hedge, lie in a June meadow, rustle the dead leaves in a wood, sit on a stile and look down on a village, or smell a bonfire on a fading October afternoon?

Now that, I think, was very nice of me, and very creditable too.

Secondly, I appeal to his compassion. When I had been ill for several months, it began to dawn on me that I did not mind my deprivations as much as I might have expected. Deprived of all that I had so passionately desired, so carefully chosen, so strenuously fought for; deprived, indeed, of all that had made my life worth living, I was less utterly destitute and downcast than I should have supposed. Naturally I wanted the things that I cared for, but on the whole I contrived to remain tolerably cheerful without them. Now why? Because of the patient heroism of my spirit, the strength of my character, or the consolations of philosophy? I hope that I have said enough to dismiss any such suggestion from the reader's mind. My comparative tolerance was, I concluded, due to the fact that I was well set in middle age. The fires of youth were beginning to burn low, its passions to fade. I simply did not want, as much as I used to want, the things which I wanted, and so I did not mind so much, as I would once have minded, being deprived of them. And with that realization I was revealed to myself as one who had passed the peak of life, and had already set foot on its declining slope.

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CHRISTIANS INTO MOTORISTS

View from Burton Down. It has been a lovely October day, one of the loveliest of the autumn. In the morning I rode along the Downs westward from Whiteways above Arundel, passing through Houghton Forest where in July the willow herb grows so thickly that the glades are bathed in a pink light. We came out into open country by the entrenchment at the top of Burton Down. I say 'open country', but in fact the Downs here are covered with a heavy scrub of little bushes, gorse and broom and box, and the open downland such as one finds going eastwards from Amberley Mount occurs only in rare patches. The scrub grows thicker every year, owing, it is said, to the decline of sheep farming—the sheep, I am told, used in some unaccountable way, to 'keep it under'—and this part of the Downs is a veritable wilderness. Human beings, thank the Lord, are a rarity, and Gumber Farm, just to the south of where we drew up, is said to be four miles from the nearest house. Through the scrub run long straight grassy tracks, and, having begun to canter, there is little reason why one should ever stop. The horses had galloped for the best part of a mile to bring us up to the entrenchment, and we dismounted to let them cool. The view from this point is, to my mind, as good as any that the south of England has to offer. To the north is a stretch of cultivated country round about Lavington and Burton Park. It is as yet¹ quite untouched, and it is so perfect a specimen of all that England once was that any community with an ounce of concern for beauty would take immediate steps to preserve it from spoliation. In the foreground are farms of old Sussex brick, lovely lichened barns, ricks in fields, and old elms arranging themselves in attitudes charged with significance in formal groups. Behind is Burton Park, a first-rate eighteenth-century specimen of its kind. In the middle distance is the

¹ This was written in 1936. Since then the army and the pylons have been at it.

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Weald, and the whole is backed by a screen of hills—Black-down and Telegraph Hill, which is above Redford Common, the hills behind Fernhurst, and, in the far distance, Hascombe, Pitch, Holmbury, and Leith. The whole was bathed in a mellow October light. . . . Being mindful of Dr. Johnson's warning—'If Mr. X—— has experienced the unutterable, Mr. X—— should not try to utter it'—I shall not even endeavour to express the feelings which this prospect aroused in me.

Most people would, I think, have preferred the view to the south. Here was a great stretch of woodland. One looked over the tops of trees flaming with October colours to Arundel Castle. Beyond was the sea. A shaft of sunlight shot down through a break in the clouds and lay full upon it, driving a silver furrow over the flat grey expanse. The prevailing colour of this whole southern view was a purplish brown—I have seen this colour often, looking southward from these Sussex Downs on autumn and winter days, but I have seen nothing quite like it anywhere else—shot through by this brilliant silver streak. . . . But I give up trying to convey what is manifestly beyond my powers. As we rode back over Bignor, West Burton, and Bury Hills, we had a full view of the Amberley Wild Brooks partly flooded now, with their backing of dark pine trees and heather country beyond. They provide just the right element of surprise in these otherwise homely views conveying, as they do, intimations of a larger countryside, and nature gods different and more aloof.

Amberley Wild Brooks. In the evening I set off to walk across them to Pulborough. It was beginning to grow dark and the horror of the brick works that have been recently and scandalously established just beyond the northern end of the Brooks was mercifully veiled from me. These brick works, by the way, have caused me more heart burning than any other single countryside horror. The far side of the Amberley Wild Brooks has always been invested for me with a certain sanctity. A low wooded hill comes down to the edge of the water meadows, and

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between the two runs a path. The path is rarely used. I must have walked it a score of times without seeing a person, and as a consequence there is an abundance of wild life. Here are stoats, weasels, squirrels, and more rabbits than I can remember to have seen in any area of comparable size. There are also the big birds which haunt the Brooks; at any moment one may see a heron or a snipe. Perhaps because of the multitude of wild things, perhaps because of the absence of people, perhaps because of the great beauty of the scene, the woods behind, the Brooks full of detail and colour in the foreground, the clean lines of Amberley Down in the distance, the place has always seemed to me to be invested with a numinous quality. It is, as it were, slightly but pleasantly haunted. Here, if anywhere, one felt, the nature gods still stayed; this was one of their last lurking places, and, if one got lost, as I was lost once in a marsh mist on a summer night, unable to see a yard in front of me and apt to stumble into the ditches that criss-cross the Brooks, one felt them very near indeed, quite unpleasantly near in fact.

I passed through them, and after some adventures in the gathering darkness in the flooded meadows on their far side, came out on the road. This used to be a small by-road, whose clay-coloured surface harmonized admirably with the green of the marshland on its verge. Every two or three hundred yards or so it was crossed by a gate. The gates have now been taken away for the greater convenience of cars and the native surface has disappeared under the inevitable coat of tarmac. The road no longer harmonizes. It is no longer an integral part of the land, but a black weal left by the whip lash of progress upon its face. Here are two bridges over the Arun, the one built in the sixteenth century is gracious and dignified, its great stone bastions stretching out into the stream; the other, built in the twentieth century, is a structure of metal and concrete topped by railings in case passers-by, appalled by its ugliness, should manifest any symptoms of wishing to escape from it and the age that produced it by throwing themselves into the river.

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Next came the village of Coldwaltham, and then a two mile stretch along the main road to Pulborough.

I have written elsewhere of main roads, and I cannot here with decency lash myself into a further outbreak of the fury that they engender. Besides, the capacity for indignation grows fatigued. But to-night there was established a new count in my indictment against the car which I cannot forbear to mention. As I have already explained, I rarely walk on main roads. I will, indeed, go to any length of trespassing and extra mileage to avoid the metal monsters which hurl themselves over their surface. It was years since I had walked upon a main road at night. Now that I did so, I was made aware of a new horror. That cars offended the senses of hearing and of smell, I already knew. It was only on this night walk that I was made to realize how they outrage the sense of sight. A glow would appear round a corner or over a rise. Gradually it would grow in brightness and then, quite suddenly, a glare of scarifying brilliance would burst upon one's shrinking eyeballs. The impact of the hard white light shocked and stunned the eyes. To look in its direction was literally a pain, yet not to look was to put oneself at the mercy of the oncoming machine. The best course, I found, was to shrink into the hedge shading the eyes with the hand until the thing had passed. As the cars followed one another at the rate of one a minute, my progress was slow. Only one motorist in every dozen thought to temper the glare of his light to the blinded pedestrian, and my subsidings into the hedge were so frequent, that it presently became clear that I was going to miss my train; so that when, presently, a faint sound of singing caught my attention, I stopped to listen. The sound came from a tiny building on the side of the road which I presently found to be a church. I leant on the gate which gave on to the road to listen. The voices were female, and so thin and meagre was their sound that it was obliterated every time a car passed. As the cars continued to follow one another at the same rate, the singing was conveyed with a curiously punctuated effect, gentle, mournful voices and grinding,

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screeching din succeeding one another in a more or less regular rhythm.

The wording of the Book of English Common Prayer is very beautiful; so too is the music of the psalms. It is in the hope that I may again experience this beauty that I go into a village church whenever I get the chance and listen to the singing and the prayers; I did so on this occasion. As I walked up the path and opened the door, the thin trickle of sound came to an end. The psalms had ended, the First Lesson had begun. I walked in and sat down. There were five worshippers, all of whom were women; there was the clergyman reading the Lesson and an uncountable number of small children in the choir. Even here the sound of the passing cars could be plainly heard. The clergyman was elderly and his voice far from strong, so that, whenever a more than usually blatant car was in transit, he became inaudible. This literal blotting out of God's message by motor-cars seemed to me the most appropriate commentary upon the valuations of the modern world that events have had the sense of dramatic fitness to provide. It was a veritable parable. I thought of the past history of the Church, of the noble army of martyrs, of the Communion of Saints, of the Resurrection of the Dead, of the popes and cardinals, of the archbishops and the bishops, of the disputes and denunciations, of the heresies and controversies, of the wars and counter-wars, and of how men had laid down their lives for a dogma or a creed. I thought of the panoply and parade, of the great Princes of the Church, of the Church's might, dominion, majesty, and power, of the great noise it had made in the world, and of how its message had come thundering into the ears of men. And now this thunderous message had trickled away to a thin murmur of sound, to be obliterated by every passing car. And, surprisingly, I was sorry. . . .

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OXFORD

Misjudgement by Oxford Authorities. I loved Oxford first, because of people and ideas; I love it now for its beauty. For years I have haunted the place, drawn by a charm which I cannot hope to analyse, always more or less miserable because I am a visitor not a resident, always nourishing the hope that before I die I may achieve my ambition, become a don and end my days in a college. For twenty-three years I have been trying intermittently to get back to Oxford, without, however, as I can now see, the slightest chance of success. I have let off too many intellectual fireworks in my time, fireworks not always in the best of taste. For example I was during the last war a strident pacifist. I am apt to be irreverent and disrespectful to the Church—at least, I used to be—and quite recently¹ there was that lamentable business of the Oxford Resolution.

I cannot help thinking that the continued indifference to my aspirations which is maintained by their object is a pity, a pity from more points of view than one. I should have made a good don, which is more than can be said of most. I am intellectually sympathetic and can enter into the minds of the young; I can teach anything to anybody; I can lecture clearly and attractively, and, almost alone among the Oxford men of my generation whom I know, I have constantly wished to return to Oxford, admiring and defending the place instead of belittling it, and keeping the flame of my reverence constantly burning in a private shrine of my own. Also, I doubt if I should now say anything very dreadful. For one thing, I am now forty-five and comparatively tame. For another, I should be much too delighted at my good fortune in getting back to the academic preserves ever to endanger my position by a repetition of the indiscretions which have excluded me. The University authorities are not, I suspect, very good psychologists. If they were, they would see that I have every incentive to

¹ It was early in 1933.

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be a good boy now, and that to all intents and purposes I am already nine parts of a good boy without any incentive at all.

The Fellows' Garden. However that may be, Oxford would have none of me in the past and I doubt whether it will have any of me in the future. Hence it is as a stranger with no status, with no footing in the colleges, with not even a house in the Banbury Road, that I make my frequent visits. I generally excuse and justify these visits by accepting an invitation to address an undergraduate society. Having made my contact with the contemporary life of the place, always very pleasant and stimulating, although perhaps not, so far as I am concerned, quite so stimulating as it used to be—I am just getting to the age when I am beginning to wonder why undergraduates are so much alike—I go off by myself to worship at some particular shrine of Oxford's beauty. Increasingly, of recent years my temple has been the Fellows' Garden of Magdalen College. It is, I believe, closed to the public, but once upon a time I knew a Magdalen don who occasionally took me there, and I have gone there ever since, prepared to give his name as a talisman, if challenged by the guardians of the place. Many years have passed since I knew this don, and I doubt very much whether he still exists; but my presence has never been challenged, and the matter has not, therefore, been put to the test. Anyway, mine is a harmless piece of trespassing, the expression of a mood very different from the spiritual vagrancies recorded on an earlier page, and I think the authorities of the University who have so long and so persistently denied me a place at their table might in common charity permit me to gobble up this very tiny crumb which falls from it for me every spring.

For it is in late spring that I chiefly go there. Taking a punt up the Cherwell from Magdalen Bridge, I disembark some distance below the rollers, and climb up the bank into the long narrow garden running beside the river, from which it is separated by a steep grassy slope, topped by trees and flowering

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shrubs. The garden is quite beautifully kept. The grass is green and shaven, the beds filled with a great variety of tastefully arranged flowers, and the fruit trees covered with an almost incredible profusion of blossom. The lilacs and rhododendrons are as fine as can be seen anywhere, and there are a number of great bird-cherry trees. Trees growing on lawns constitute to my mind one of the most beautiful combinations in nature, and all these bird-cherries spring straight from the grass. There is great formality in the arrangement of this garden, but the formality is never prim. It never, for example, excludes gaiety, and the place is very gay with wallflowers and forget-me-nots and aubretia. It is, too, alive with birds. Here in these latter years I have sat for hours at a time on a seat at the edge of a little lawn. At my back is a flight of steps running down to the Cherwell, in front a cherry tree, one of the largest I have seen, which in spring-time is a solid mass of living white. Under the tree is a little statue of a garden god. Two faun-like ears show through his curly hair and from his open mouth a thin jet of water continuously pours.

Compensations for Middle Age. I have come, I think, at last to realize that my nostalgia for Oxford is born of a wistful craving for its beauty. During most of the time that I have longed for the career of a don, I have believed that the life of a teacher at Oxford could be of great significance in the modern world. Moulding and informing the minds of young men, turning them imperceptibly to the ends which appear to one to be good, one could, vicariously as it were, influence the course of events over which one had failed to obtain any direct control. Now I have rid myself of the delusion that the course of events is any longer controlled by the men whom Oxford sends into the world. Even if it were, I doubt whether the average don possesses over the average undergraduate the influence which my teachers exercised upon me. As an undergraduate I was, I now realize, to a quite exceptional degree intellectually impressionable. I did not merely take to ideas: ideas rushed to my head. It

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is terrifying to a middle-aged man conversing with undergraduates to listen to the strain of derisive commentary in which they discuss the failings and foibles of their dons. . . . But though the influence which I might have exerted over the minds of the young no longer seems as attractive as it did, the pull of Oxford's beauty grows stronger with the years. It is, indeed, the chief consolation for that waning of one's physical powers that comes with middle age, for one's difficulty in ascending mountains, one's new sense of effort in running down them, the slowness of recovery from fatigue, the obstinate refusal of scars to heal, of sprained limbs and twisted ankles to straighten themselves, the inability to play three sets of singles at tennis, the slowing up of one's footwork at the wicket, one's terrible exhaustion at hockey—it is, I say, some slight compensation for these things that one's sensibility to beauty increases. It increases in the sense that there are more things that move one aesthetically, and it increases—or, at least, I like to think it does—in the sense that they move one more deeply, so that one's pleasure in nature and in music, and, may I add, in wine and food, comes largely to replace the purely physical pleasures of the body.

from
JOURNEY THROUGH THE WAR
MIND

(written Autumn 1939)



ADVENTURE

*Ralaef Lodge,
Enoch Dhu.*

Friday, 1st September

It has been an extraordinary day, how extraordinary it is only now, sitting here alone by the fire, twenty-four miles from the nearest main road and fifty from the nearest person that I know, that I have begun to realize.

I had spent the earlier part of the week at Scarborough, where I had an engagement to lecture to the Co-operative Wholesale Society's Summer School. At any other time I would have enjoyed writing an account of the school, and dwelling upon the refreshing parochialism of its members—they still, it seems, believe that by means of co-operation, the sort of co-operation that one finds in the Consumers' Co-operative Society, the world may be saved and the millennium introduced, and are inclined to scout any suggestion of world disaster, or, if they admit the possibility of disaster, to be impatient of any remedy other than the sort of co-operation which is so notably exemplified by the Consumers' Co-operative Society—their enormous interest in one another and their happy remoteness from contemporary events. Nothing, it was clear, was going to prevent them from enjoying the usual holiday in the usual way, not even the imminence of a European war. I applauded this

JOURNEY THROUGH THE WAR MIND

determination and did my best to emulate the state of mind from which it sprang. In this I was reasonably successful. In fact I was sufficiently infected by the Olympian detachment of the Co-operators to forget for long periods on end the European situation, and what with bathing, lecturing, playing in a cricket match, dining out with some very pleasant preparatory schoolmasters just down from Oxford, going to see *Mr. Chips*—one of the best of films, just sufficiently on the right side of sentimentality to make one feel elevated without feeling sick, and engendering a belief in the fundamental decency of human nature and a determination to be decent oneself—taking a long walk up to Lillah Cross on the heather moors behind Cloughton, and cultivating the society of an exceptionally agreeable and attractive niece, I contrived to pass a very pleasant week.

For to-day the National Peace Council, of which I am at the moment the Chairman, had called an emergency meeting to consider the European situation and I had arranged to get my lectures at the school over in four days so that I could return to town on Thursday night and be in time for the meeting this morning. It had also happened that my friend Donald Morley, who is the proud possessor of a shooting lodge in Scotland, had invited me to spend some days with him and try my hand at shooting grouse and catching trout. I have always wanted to shoot grouse, which I have never done, and always wanted to catch trout, which I have often tried to do but never, at least, scarcely ever, done—fish never seem to bite when I am fishing—but more than grouse-shooting and trout-fishing did I want to diminish the vast extent of my ignorance of the Scottish Highlands.

And so on yesterday evening I was torn two ways. Duty certainly seemed to point to a return to London in order to attend the meeting of the National Peace Council. Yet I was unable to conceive what useful purpose a meeting of either Council or Executive could serve at the moment. We had already sent a telegram to the Prime Minister asking him to make every effort (a) to establish direct negotiations between Ger-

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many and Poland; (b) to extend these negotiations into a discussion of all the problems which bedevil contemporary Europe, with a view to effecting a general settlement to which Great Britain was urged to make positive contributions.

How admirable, but also, alas, how ineffective! The view of the National Peace Council had about as much chance of being attended to as the squeak of a mouse exhorting to conciliation a couple of lions who were roaring defiance and lashing their tails preparatory to mortal combat.

Anyway we had sent our telegram, and what more we could do I was unable to imagine.

Why, then, go to London simply to attend a meeting which could serve no useful purpose? 'But then,' I said to myself, 'you ought to be on the spot in case war does come, to darken the windows, comfort the family, assist in their removal to our house in the country and generally make yourself useful.' 'A fat lot of use I should be,' I answered myself. 'I shall only get in the way, fuss, upset myself, and become infected with the prevailing agitation. Much better stay out of the way until there is something I can do.' Additional considerations were (1) that on Thursday night the situation looked a little better. There seemed to me to be reasons—it doesn't much matter now what they were—for thinking that war, even if it were to come, could not break out for several days; (2) that I am fond of Donald Morley, who is an old friend, admire his clever and talented wife, had not seen them for some time, had often proposed to myself the idea of going to visit them in Scotland, and for one reason or another failed to come up to the scratch and thought that, if I didn't keep my promise this time, I should never be asked again.

Besides, I was already in Yorkshire, which was half-way to the Highlands, and Donald, I knew, was at his lodge and had written to say that he would stay there, unless war was declared. Only that morning I had received a telegram saying he was expecting me on Friday.

Until the very last moment I remained undecided. I caught

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the 10 o'clock train at Scarborough on the Thursday night and left it at York. The train to London went south from Platform 7 in fifteen minutes; the train for Scotland went north from Platform 9 in ten. So great was my indecision that I thought I would let the Almighty decide for me: if there was a vacant third-class sleeper on the northern train then, I told myself, I would take it; if not, not. (But then I never expected that there *would* be a vacant sleeper, since evacuation had already begun.) The northern train drew in and there was just one sleeper. I accepted the sleeper as a sign of divine approval and went north to Scotland. (I never, by the way, interpret *bad* luck as a sign of divine disapproval.)

Ralaef, Donald's shooting-lodge, was, I knew, very remote and solitary. There was no telephone, no post was delivered, the nearest shop, I understood, was twenty-odd miles away, and one reached the house by a track just passable for motors, which left the main road somewhere near this shop. If, on the other hand, one went to B——, walked or taxied to Forest Lodge, and then took a path over the mountains, the distance to Ralaef was only seventeen miles, eight miles in the taxi and nine over the mountains.

I arrived at B—— at six-thirty-four, having by the aid of Harbutt's beneficial ear plugs, slept tolerably well. Before starting on my walk I thought I had better have breakfast. Nothing seemed to offer itself but a small temperance hotel, where, after a good deal of trouble, I managed to obtain some breakfast about seven-thirty, and was duly charged four shillings for porridge, scrambled eggs, and coffee. At eight-thirty I was looking for a taxi. There was, it turned out, only one in the whole place, and this had already been impounded for the transport of evacuated children. It looked as if I should have to walk the eight miles to Forest Lodge, and then the nine further miles over the mountains to Ralaef.

While I was pondering the prospect, the papers arrived. The *News Chronicle* featured on its front page the terms of Hitler's proposal for a settlement to the Polish dispute. He was to have

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Danzig at once and unreservedly, but there was to be a plebiscite over the future of the Corridor, to be presided over by an international commission on the lines of the Saar plebiscite. This seemed to me to be hopeful. It was, I thought, at least a basis on which to negotiate. I felt vastly encouraged and, taking the paper under my arm to show the Morleys, set off on my walk.

It was a warm, sultry morning, the sky veiled by low, heavy clouds, and the atmosphere much like that of a Turkish bath. I started off through B—— park and was presently pounding along a bridle track running through woods by the side of a gorge. Along the bottom of the gorge a rapidly flowing river, the Tilt, ran its adventurous course, with frequent waterfalls and rapids. It was all very fine, but by the time my road crossed the river about four miles out of B—— I was already feeling tired and viewing with apprehension the remaining thirteen miles. Seventeen miles would have been nothing to me once, but now I am grown fat and heavy on my feet and in summer the least exertion puts me into a bath of sweat. Besides, my rucksack was very heavy, and the road seemed to go perpetually uphill. Also it seemed closer than ever. I rested, read the paper, and went on.

The woods had now come to an end and the road ran through open country with big fells which looked like the Yorkshire Pennines rising on each side of the river valley. Every two miles there was a farm, and as each farm was reached, I sat down for a rest. At the last farm before Forest Lodge I talked with the farmer, who had been listening to the ten-thirty news. He said that Hitler had been making a speech in which he had said something about meeting force with force. I pressed him for more details, but this, he said, was all that he had managed to pick up, and being now concerned only to get to the end of my walk, I paid little attention and went on. Now this, as will presently appear, was an exceedingly important conversation; more because of what it omitted than of what it included.

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Forest Lodge, I calculated, was a good nine miles from B—— station and by the time I reached it I wanted my lunch. I had bought some cut ham, bread and butter and oranges at the B—— stores and was sitting down to eat them by a stream when the rain which had been threatening all the morning came down. I had no mackintosh and the minimum of clothes in my rucksack, so to avoid getting wet I lunched squatting on some rocks in the bed of the stream under a bridge. It was a cold and cheerless business, so I cut lunch short, took off my coat and shirt, put the coat in my rucksack, and clutching the shirt, which was drenched with perspiration, and the *News Chronicle*, which was beginning to disintegrate, in one hand and *Tom Jones* and the map in the other, went on bare from the waist upwards.

The rain was a drizzle rather than a steady downpour—it was, I suppose, what is called a Scotch mist—and presently *Tom Jones*, the *News Chronicle*, the map and the shirt began to merge into a solid lump of indistinguishable dankness. I came to the end of the bridle track about two miles beyond Forest Lodge, where a car and a caravan marked the limits of civilization.

I was now following a path which ran rather sharply upwards along the side of the stream. I began to get dreadfully tired, and, as always when I am tired, I fell into a sort of dazed coma in which I could think of nothing but the way, how far it was, and when I would get to the end of it; and, as always when I am tired, a rather silly refrain began to repeat itself interminably in my head. On this occasion it was the song that Charlie Chaplin sings in *Modern Times*.

Presently I began to speak my thoughts aloud to myself. 'That', I would say, 'must be the little stream marked on the map. It is a damned sight farther from the first stream I crossed than the map suggests.' For the tireder I grew, the longer seemed the way, so that I could have sworn that every mile was two.

There came a moment when, reaching a landmark, I sud-

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denly realized I had broken the back of my journey. It was only one mile to the falls of Tarf; it could not be much more than three from there to Ralaef. To signalize my sense of relief I went down to the river, took off my clothes and bathed. It was terribly cold but very refreshing. Having put on my clothes, that is to say, my trousers, I looked at my watch. It was now about two-thirty, and I should, I imagined, arrive about four. Already I pictured myself drinking tea and telling the Morleys all about my walk. After tea I would lie down.

Shortly after the falls of Tarf the path forked, the left-hand path went over the fell-side, the right followed for a time along the stream, climbed a little over a ridge and so to Ralaef. Much encouraged, I went along the right-hand fork. I walked and walked but still there was no Ralaef. 'This', I said to myself, 'is a very long three miles. But then', I added, 'you are very tired and you know how tiredness makes one overrate distances. Besides, there's the stream and here is the path.'

In spite of these self-assurances I did not feel quite easy in my mind. There were, it seemed to me, one or two landmarks which, if the route were correct, should have been there but were not; and one or two which were there and should not have been. But these discrepancies I put down to my own misreading of the map. The valley, which had now become a gorge, along which the river ran, seemed endless; I must, I reckoned, have walked at least four miles from the falls of Tarf. Suddenly the gorge came to an end and there, sure enough, on a flat green expanse stood what appeared to be a large white building. The air was very misty and I couldn't see it clearly, but it must—of course it must—be the house.

I went on for another quarter mile; there was no house there. I had seen a mirage born of mist and my own fatigue. I had a moment of real panic. Ralaef did not exist; the place was bewitched, the map, the mountains, the Morleys were all in a conspiracy to bemuse and destroy me. In mitigation of my folly it must be remembered that I had been walking since eight in the morning and that it was now nearly four; that I had, dur-

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ing this time, seen only one person; that the wildness of the scenery had first impressed, then terrified, then 'got me down'. I knew how sparsely populated the Highlands were, how few the houses, how vast the moors. These fells which ran up fifteen hundred feet on every side of me did not, as in the wild places I knew—the Lakes, the Pennines, or North Wales—conceal valleys dotted with farmhouses and villages; behind them were more fells topped by bogs, rising to mountains well over three thousand feet high, and stretching without sign of human habitation for dozens of miles.

Frenziedly I pulled out the map and spread it on the heather. Where had I gone wrong? In a moment I saw. At the point a mile beyond the falls of Tarf where the path divided, there were not two paths, but three; what I had taken to be the right-hand path was in fact the middle. There was another path farther to the right of the one I had taken, and this was the path that led to Ralaef. It was a good three miles back to the fork, but there was nothing for it but to return. In a sense I was glad to know where I had gone wrong and what I should now do to go right. Nevertheless, my morale was so shattered by fatigue that I distrusted everything; my map-reading, my conclusions, my ability to act on them, my ability to follow the map at all. Normally I rather pride myself on my map-reading. How, then, I asked myself, could I have made such a silly mistake? And what guarantee was there that I would not make another?

Forgetting my fatigue in my panic, I started back at speed, but my feet were stumbling and unsure and, before I had gone half a mile, I turned my ankle and fell. The shock caused me to go more cautiously. Suppose I were seriously to twist my ankle or hurt my foot, so that I could go no farther? Who would find me in a place like this? I did not answer the question.

Slowly I made my way back to the fork. After what seemed hours and was, I suppose, something less than an hour, I found it. Yes, there was the right-hand path going steeply up the fell-side on the opposite side of the stream. If my reasoning was right, I had only to follow it and in two or three miles I should

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be at Ralaef. If not! I could not bear to think what would happen if not.

Those last three miles were endless. At any time I should have found them difficult to negotiate. The climb to the top of the fell was severe enough, and when the fell-top was reached, the path lost itself in a bog and became exceedingly difficult to follow. In a thick mist, I doubt if I could have found it at all. The scenery was formidable to a degree. I was now on a plateau covered by coarse grass and heather which seemed to stretch out indefinitely in every direction. In the farther distance were great hills half-shrouded in mist, with deep gorges running far into their sides. The horizon was shut in by peaks and clouds. It was a vaster and a lonelier prospect than I had ever seen, and nowhere in the whole expanse was there the slightest sign of man and his works, excepting only the doubtful path I was treading. When, topping a final ridge, I saw a group of buildings about a quarter of a mile in front of me, I could hardly believe them to be real, and that my ardours and endurances were at last over. In sight of the house, it occurred to me to wonder for a moment whether the Morleys had not, after all, gone. It would, I thought, be a fitting conclusion to the hazards and hardships of the day to find the place empty. But a column of smoke ascending from one of the chimneys reassured me. The house was a square, rambling building surrounded by half a dozen cottages and outhouses, with what seemed an enormous number of chimneys sprouting from its roof. 'Thank the Lord,' I said to myself. 'Comfort, a hot bath, good food, and a bottle of wine. Also company!' I made for the front door. There was no bell, so I opened it and walked in. There seemed to be nobody about. I called aloud the name of my host. Then a green baize door opened and a young man, scarcely more than a boy, with a white face, appeared. 'Is Mr. Morley in?' I asked. He shook his head. 'Mrs. Morley?' He shook it again. 'Have they gone out?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Do you know when they will be back?' 'They won't be back, sir.' I must have looked rather disconcerted, for he went on to add: 'Mr. and Mrs. Morley

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packed up in a hurry and left at twelve o'clock this morning after hearing the news on the wireless.' 'What news?' 'Haven't you heard, sir?' he said, 'Germany declared war on Poland early this morning.'

As he uttered these remarkable words, there arose in the bowels of the house a sound, one of the most dreadful with which my ears have ever had the misfortune to be affronted. It was a cross between singing, screaming, moaning, and crooning. Reflecting upon it afterwards, I came to the conclusion that it must be the kind of noise denoted by the word 'keening'. Crones in Irish plays 'keen', but I had never heard 'keening' in real life. 'What on earth', I asked the boy, 'is that?' 'That's the cook, sir,' he replied. Summoning my courage, I went into the kitchen to investigate the cook and to see if it were possible to get my clothes dried. At the table there sat a large woman with a red, blotched face; from her chin sprouted abundant tufts of hair, and she had a wild swivelling eye which roamed to and fro in its socket. As I came in, she suspended her 'keening', fixed me with the eye, and broke into rapid, violent speech. To my surprise I discovered that the speech was French or something which more closely resembled French than any other language. So strongly had the idea of a local crone, half crazed by the mountains and mists in which she had spent her life, fixed itself in my mind that for a moment I could make nothing of this stream of French words. Then I remembered that the Morleys prided themselves on the possession of a Basque cook who, though acclaimed a mistress of her art, was nevertheless reported to be queer in the head. This obviously was the cook, left behind in the hurry of departure. I did my best to get into communication with her, but although my French is tolerably fluent, albeit inaccurate, I made little headway. This was not surprising since (a) her Basque idioms and pronunciation would have been at the best of times extremely difficult to understand; (b) she was very deaf; (c) she was in fact queer in the head; (d) she was obviously excited by the sudden departure of the Morleys, realized that strange doings were

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afoot, and kept shouting at the top of her voice that there could not be a war because God had forbidden it. As my clothes were drying, she sat and raved at me, shouting, singing and, on one occasion—I do not expect this to be believed; indeed, I never thought to see such a thing myself—she put up her hand to her head, clutched some of her hair, and tore it out.

A curious situation, I reflected, in which to meet the Great War of 1939. Here was I marooned in the Scotch mountains, eight miles from the nearest house, twenty from the nearest village. I was with people no single one of whom I had ever seen before in my life; a young man, a maid, the keeper, and his wife, and to add a touch of nightmare to the whole, a mad cook.

Presently normality reasserted itself. I had a hot bath, heard the six o'clock news, had dinner—not at all a bad dinner, considering the circumstances—drank half a bottle of Burgundy which the boy butler found in a cupboard, had a glass of liqueur, and am now sitting down by the fire to take stock of the situation. The car is going down the road to-morrow to P—to take back the cook. I, presumably, shall go with her and help to pilot her to London. It should be a formidable undertaking, especially if trains are uncertain, late, or non-existent, and if, as is only too likely, what trains there are should be full of soldiers and evacuees. If the cook starts singing in the carriage, I do not know how I shall cope with the situation.¹

The sensible thing would be to stay here for a few days, shoot grouse, catch trout, and see how things develop. But I am restless and apprehensive, and pervaded by a new-found gregariousness. I crave the society of my kind. I feel that I must at all costs get back to London and see what is happening; then, perhaps, it will be possible to make plans. And so to-morrow I have contracted to pilot a half-crazed French cook across Scot-

¹ She *did* start singing and, shamefully, after doing my best to appear unconnected, I withdrew from the carriage.

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land and England, which is an unpremeditated by-product of the international situation.

WINTER WALKING IN SURREY

25th November 1939

I am very fond of winter walking. For one thing, I can walk farther in winter. In July, I am in a bath of perspiration after the first mile, and in need of a rest after the third. In November, I can still do nine or ten without a break, and as I no longer drown my clothes in torrents of sweat, I am not put to the trouble of constantly changing them for fear of lumbago. I feel no need of going to sleep after lunch; for one thing it is too cold; for another, I am not sleepy. And so I can sit on a tree stump and look at nature.

In winter the country is empty. There are no crowds of young people careering through the woods with raucous cries and inane laughter; and by consequence there is no scurf of cigarette cartons, empty tins, and discarded newspapers. If I go to a cheap lodging, a farmhouse, or even a Youth Hostel, there are no rowdies from the towns to keep me awake; I have the place to myself.

For the young know little of the joys of winter walking, and only venture into the country in weather that is fine and warm. Now winter, they think, is cold and wet. Cold it may be, and why not, pray? For my part, I like the cold, which brisks me up so that I can keep up with anybody on a cold day. But wet it most certainly is not, at least, not especially wet. It rains far more, I am convinced, in July and August than ever it does in December and January.

Finally, in the winter I can go across country. There is no undergrowth in the woods; there are no crops in the fields, and no bracken on the slopes. One walks free and unencumbered and, broadly speaking, one walks where one likes.

And how much more one sees! In August the country is muffled under a blanket of dull green. The blanket spoils its

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shape and blurs its contours. (It is a depressing thought that August, which is the dullest month of the year, is the only month in which most people see the country.) The winds of winter have stripped the blanket away and laid bare the bones and naked structure of the countryside. And how lovely that structure is! I would give all the tender greens of young spring, all the gorgeous colours of the autumn woods' decay, for the bare boughs of an oak with its tracery of little twigs silhouetted against the dark red of an afternoon sky in December. The sun has just set and over against it, glimpsed through the infinitely lovely pattern-work of the twigs, there is an evening star. There is a tang in the air; the earth rings hard under the feet; there will be a frost to-night. So home to a coal fire, with lamp-light and the curtains drawn; the kettle boiling on the hob, and crumpets for tea. What has summer to offer comparable to these winter delights?

To-day has been just such a day, and now at the end of it I am enjoying just such a moment. I left London yesterday evening, spent the night with a friend at Guildford, and took the bus early in the morning to Smithwood Common.

Smithwood Common is within striking distance of that stretch of country which, in the winter, I most love, a stretch which, taking Peaslake as a centre, has for its northern boundary the slopes of the North Downs from Merrow in the west to Headley in the east; for its eastern, a line running through Headley southwards to Ockley; for its southern, the Fold country, which is to be found along the borders of Surrey and Sussex; and for its western, a line running northwards through Hascombe Hill to the Cranleigh-Guildford road. It is a very varied stretch, ranging from wooded chalk downs in the north, through sand hills covered with heather and pine in the middle, to the country of the Weald in the south.

This last is very lovely and has as yet been scarcely defiled by our times. It is a land of little hills and valleys, so small that one's view changes with every half mile; of hazel copses, through which flow little streams; of big parks running up to

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the foot of the sand hills in the north and studded with mighty trees. The best time for it is early spring, when the primroses and daffodils come as early and as abundantly as anywhere in the south of England. (I have often found primroses under the lee of Pitch Hill in December.) But the flowers here are at all times incredibly profuse, the hazel copses being literally carpeted, first with yellow, and then, as the primroses give way to bluebells, with blue. Carpeted, I insist, is the exact word; you cannot put your foot down without treading on flowers.

Through this country I walked in the morning, going across country from Smithwood to Ewhurst. This part is not well adapted to winter walking, the streams being swollen to little torrents and the mud being the lush, sticky, clay mud of the Weald. But for all that, the walk was lovely enough and I was content. I had my bread, cheese, and onion in a little beer-house in Ewhurst and listened to the usual talk of the black-out and the high cost of living. (In parenthesis, it is one of the minor drawbacks of the war that it has still further obliterated the already diminishing gulf which separates town from country talk.)

After lunch I climbed up on to Pitch Hill and then went north-west through the great Hurt Wood. A gloomy tract this, where nothing grows and no bird sings, though occasionally a yaffle laughs. The trees are for the most part dwarf oaks which are said to be enormously old, for this is part of the primeval forest of England; but there are also great belts of pines which fringe the sides of ravines, and on a dull day, when the wind soughs through the trees, very sombre they look and very gloomy they sound. But this was a calm afternoon, with a clear light in the sky and just a hint of frost in the air; and by the time I came to the stretch of green country which separates the Hurt Wood from Black Heath, I was in a state of considerable exhilaration. This again is a miniature country of little hills covered with copses, and valleys threaded by streams, but interestingly different from that of the Weald. There the soil is thick and clayey; here, light with an admixture of chalk; as a

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consequence, the vegetation is less lush, the grass is less green, and the trees smaller. But there are some beautiful hidden valleys running into Black Heath both from the north and from the south sides, and along one of these there runs a brook full of watercress.

I descended at teatime, tired and muddy, upon a friend who lives on the other side of Albury; and now, after a hot bath, am sitting before a fire in my room, looking over the record of conversations which has occupied my journey through the war mind. I have just begun to read them, and after dinner and a game of billiards at which I expect to beat my host, I shall come early to bed and go on with the reading. Then I shall try to come to some sort of verdict on the answer to the questions which set me going on my round of inquiries.

from
RETURN TO PHILOSOPHY
(written 1934)



PHILOSOPHICAL BUSINESS MEN

Meals with the Great. I have frequently been surprised by the appeal of philosophy to successful men of the world. Those who have achieved wealth, eminence, and power by virtue of being hard-headed practical men with no nonsense about them, seem late in life to develop a kind of soft spot in the brain through which, mysteriously, philosophy creeps. Sooner or later, if I may mix my physiology, the hardest head develops its Achilles heel, and this Achilles heel is a conviction that its owner is an original metaphysician. As a professional philosopher who has written a number of philosophical books, it has been my lot to come into contact with a number of such men during their late metaphysical periods. The contact has usually begun with the arrival of a discreet note from some well-known man of affairs, asking me to lunch or dinner. Highly gratified and pleasantly expectant of some proposal redounding to my credit or profit, I have accepted.

I am surprised at the modesty, at the diffidence almost, with which the great man receives me, especially when it becomes clear that a tête-à-tête between myself and my host is intended. During the meal, usually an admirable one, we talk on indifferent topics; he volubly and assertively, I gradually subsiding into the muddled acquiescence which good wine causes me to extend to all opinions, however outrageous. Yet behind the volubility and the assertiveness, the diffidence, it is obvious, is still there. By the time the table has been cleared, coffee served,

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cigars lighted, decanters placed on the board, and the servants withdrawn, it has become unmistakable nervousness. A sort of imminence gradually creeps into the atmosphere; a disclosure, it is clear, is impending.

After-Dinner Philosophy. The Universe Unriddled. And presently out it comes. My host, it seems, has for years past been giving his attention to philosophical subjects. He has, he knows, no training in philosophy, but he has been interested in it all his life. As a token of this lifelong interest he has drawn up a scheme, a plan, a system, theory, or formula, the fruit of prolonged meditation, which he believes to be not entirely without importance. Growing enthusiastic as he proceeds, he divulges that the scheme, plan, system, or what not, is nothing less than a complete philosophy of the universe, in the course of which all problems which have at various times puzzled philosophers are finally set at rest.

This scheme he has resolved to lay before me, and with an exquisite mixture of diffidence and condescension he finally produces from a drawer a typewritten manuscript, carefully sealed and swathed in tape. The seal is elaborate, the tape brightly coloured, the typing exquisite. And that is all! As for the contents, the scheme, system, theory, philosophy, it has turned out with practically no exceptions to be complete balderdash, the degree of its sense being inversely proportional to the magnitude of its pretensions.

In this way I have been honoured in strict confidence with a private and advance view of the philosophies of a newspaper proprietor, a theatrical producer, and the head of a big business syndicate, all men with well-known names at the very top of their professions, not to mention the meditations of smaller fry. And in every case the actual content of their solemnly divulged productions has been worthless. What they have had to say about life and the universe has been just nothing at all.

I cannot trust myself to reproduce actual conversations, but the following letter (whose authorship I must not for obvious

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reasons disclose), is typical of a number that I have received following these intimate occasions; it reproduces the atmosphere of faint reproach for my apparent unresponsiveness, my failure to be impressed, which they have usually sought to convey, and will serve to illustrate the attitude and assurance of my eminent hosts.

‘Dear Mr. Joad,

‘I am sending you herewith a memorandum containing an outline of the scheme I had the honour of laying before you last night. It contains “My Philosophy”, and after our talk I feel certain not only that you will be deeply moved by what you read, but that it will interest and enlighten you on many points which may previously have been obscure to you.

‘I ought, perhaps, to say a word as to the origin of my thought. This is strictly supernatural. I believe that I have “recollected” (by the Socratic method of Recollection) a new meaning to the universe, and one which is not only compatible with scientific fact, but which throws new light on physics. I believe it to be the vision of the whole universe held by Socrates and, in a stilted and lesser way, by Spinoza. I began my philosophic studies with the Platonic Dialogues, and on the first reading “recollected”, as it were, the real beliefs of Socrates. (I may have only recollected a justification for those views.) The *Timaeus*, I believe, because of Plato’s reluctance to discuss the physical aspect of the universe, has not been given, during this century, the prominence that is due to it. I am convinced that this Dialogue contains information on the cosmical constant and its relation to the atom. At least I had knowledge from the *Timaeus* of such things before reading anything at all on modern physics.

‘I have read extensively since my “recollection”, and with, I hope, an unbiased mind, but I have found nothing in the accepted interpretations of Plato, nor in any philosophic system from Thales to Hegel, nor in the main theories of Jeans, Eddington, Einstein, and Planck (in so far as they are compatible

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with scientific fact) to cast any doubt on my "recollected" scheme of the universe.

'My philosophy deals more particularly with the Spiritual side of life. I did not mention to you last night that I have had two visions both of which occurred in daylight. This is, however, the case and the system I have "recollected" is largely based upon them. This system has taken me years of hard study to prepare, but I am glad to say that I have succeeded with it so well that it now contains the key to the cosmos.

'I do not believe that such a comprehensive scheme which solves so many difficulties has been put forward before, and although what I send you is only an outline, you will, I am sure, realize that it contains the solution of all the traditional problems of philosophy, evil, matter, the many in one, the nature of being, and causation. All these fall into their place in my general scheme like the parts of a machine.

'You will, no doubt, wish to communicate with me again immediately you have read the enclosed, and you will find me ready and delighted to listen to your comments and to answer any questions that may yet remain.

'Yours expectantly.'

A Philosophic Connoisseur. A short time ago an eminent book collector asked me to dinner. The name of this man is known throughout the literary world. It is a name which stands for high business capacity, a keen understanding of men and affairs and an unequalled knowledge of the value of first editions. Its owner is also known for his fine culture, his courtesy, his old-fashioned and liberal hospitality. As the novelists would say, he knows and is known by everybody worth knowing. He is the friend of many of the leading literary men of our time, and his friendship is deservedly valued.

I accepted the invitation. There were no other guests; the meal was admirable; so, for the first half of it was my host, whose conversation, which was full of anecdotes of famous people, interspersed with shrewd and amusing comments on

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the contemporary scene, gave me very great pleasure. He could explain exactly why Shaw's broadcast address in America was not a success, estimate to a pound the value of Hardy's various MSS., and appraise with a wealth of illustrative detail Arnold Bennett's vaunted competence as a business man. On these and kindred subjects, which were inevitably of great interest to an author, his comments were intriguing, his judgement shrewd, his knowledge prodigious.

About half-way through dinner, however, certain of the well-known symptoms began to appear. Slyly the mind of my host began to nod at me; intellectually he winked; spiritually he dug me in the ribs. There was a secretiveness, a hesitation which ill concealed the sense of a coming revelation. The significance which crept into the conversation was almost conspiratorial. . . . My worst expectations were quickly realized. Mr. X had, it seemed, been devoting his attention for some time past to what he called the Cosmos. He had given to the subject the most prolonged meditation, often apparently to the exclusion of his business preoccupations. The preliminary fruits of these meditations he had ventured to commit to paper, and he was anxious to have my opinion upon them. It was his intention, at a later date, to set out his conclusions in somewhat greater detail, and then to summon the leading intellects of our time to a dinner—Shaw, Wells, Chesterton, Inge, Alexander, Bertrand Russell, Jeans, and Eddington, were, I remember, mentioned—at which he proposed to read to them the contents of what he called his last will and testament to mankind, which was, so far as I can remember, entitled '*The Nature of Substantive Being*'. Meanwhile, he would be glad if I would look through the preliminary draft, which in fifteen typed pages contained the gist of his philosophy of the Cosmos, 'the kernel', as he called it, of truth. He must, he had the grace to add, excuse himself for springing the thing upon me like this, but when I had read, I would, he assured me, understand his motive for acting as he had done, and he went on to imply—although the actual implication was left undrawn—that the importance of the subject

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matter would be found to justify *any* method of bringing it to my notice. And with an expression of absolute confidence in the importance of its contents and a hope that I should not be disturbed or thrown off my mental balance by the original, the shatteringly original import of its revelation, he thrust into my hand the inevitable roll of neatly ribboned manuscript, charging me to look at it there and then. With the eyes of my host upon me I opened, read, and was dismayed. The stuff was just pre-tentious balderdash!

Predicament of a Guest. Conceive the difficulty of my position. My host was, I repeat, a man of exquisite manners and refined courtesy. He had just given me an admirable dinner, thoughtfully chosen, perfectly cooked. I was at that moment drinking his excellent port, and now in a moment of confidence he was revealing to me the secrets of his private thought; he was making me free of his carefully garnered wisdom. I held in my hands 'his last will and testament to mankind'. And frankly I thought it nonsense. Three-quarters of it I could not understand at all; it seemed to me to be meaningless. The remaining quarter was a farrago of stale platitude and ethico-religious uplift. I am not usually unready in words, but on this occasion I simply did not know what to say. I could not even meet my host's eyes.

He presses me to discuss arrangements for the dinner to Shaw, Inge, Alexander, and the rest. Who should be invited? When should it be held? I shuffle and evade, for I know that there will be no dinner, and that, even if by some miracle these eminent men were gathered together at the same table, they would not listen to this kind of nonsense for a moment. Urged to say what I think of the preliminary draft, I am driven to subterfuge. And so I lie that I am going away into the country for a short time; if the manuscript is sent to me there, I will read it with more care and attention than it is possible to bestow upon such a document in London and after such a dinner. Will he, then, send it to me? Meanwhile I have had a delightful evening. . . . I make my excuses and depart.

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In due course I return the MS. with a conventional note of polite praise. The habitual acuteness of Mr. X's knowledge of men and affairs must at this stage have supervened upon the *naïveté* with which he judged his own productions for I was not again asked to comment upon '*The Nature of Substantive Being*', nor have I heard that the dinner to Inge, Shaw, Eddington, and the rest has taken place.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY COMMENTS ON THE TWELFTH

Chartres Cathedral. That Chartres Cathedral is one of the most glorious sights that rejoices the eye of man few will be found to deny. It is, indeed, a miracle of loveliness. It is of great size and towering height; yet, so perfect is the proportioning of its parts, that it appears of only moderate dimensions even to a 'close up' view. It looks, for example, no larger than Winchester Cathedral, much smaller than St. Paul's. It is, says the guide-book, the most perfect monument that the Middle Ages have bequeathed to posterity. I am quite ready to believe it.

The cathedral is encircled on the outside with the faces and figures not only of angels and saints, but of devils; hundreds of devils, and of the most grotesque shapes, thrusting their malignant countenances from the numberless parapets and buttresses to threaten or to leer at an indifferent world. At least, it is indifferent to-day. We do not now believe in the reality of objective evil; and after a casual glance at the devils we glance away again, too busy with our sightseeing to meditate upon the mood of their makers. If we spare them a second look, it is only to laugh at their hideousness. For the Middle Ages, I suppose, they were real enough, visible emblems of the powers of darkness, which were believed to be as integral a part of the constitution of the universe as those of goodness and of light. Why were they featured in a temple to their enemies, God and His angels? Partly, perhaps, in propitiation, partly in scorn. The intention, it may well have been, was to humiliate them by

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giving them positions ludicrous, undignified, or obscure. The suggestion is the merest guesswork. So far is the mood of the sculptors of the Middle Ages from our modern comprehension, that to speculate upon their motives is idle. It is enough that we should have their work. And their work, I repeat, is lovely. What is most remarkable is the combination of simplicity and complexity. It is not that a balance has been struck; the two modes, the simplicity, the complexity, exist side by side; yet neither interferes with the effect of the other. On the one hand there are the bare, stark outlines of the southern tower; on the other the infinite multiplicity of detail of the northern, a multiplicity which extends over the cathedral as a whole, so that looking down upon the maze of turrets, gargoyles, statues, pillars, buttresses, arches, and parapets, one seems less to be regarding a single building than a whole city in which nothing would be easier than for the stranger to lose his way. Yet the complexity never degenerates into a muddle. By some miracle form is retained, and the infinitely numerous details fall effortlessly into their places as parts of an integrated whole.

Within are solemnity and grandeur. Immense pillars soar to the decorated roof, and the many windows of highly coloured glass diffuse a light, dim but incredibly rich, over the vast interior. Chartres Cathedral is a monument to the glory of the human spirit; like a Bach fugue or a Mozart quartet it bears witness to all that the human spirit might be, would like to be, in its most optimistic moments conceives that it will be, and in practice, alas, so rarely is. Rarely, and as the centuries go by, it would seem, increasingly rarely.

Aeroplane Sheds. On the hill opposite the cathedral across the river valley, along which the houses of the old town are strung, there is an aerodrome. Enormous tin shapes, the homes of the aeroplanes, squat hugely upon the flat top of the down. A line of poles connected by wires runs along its edge. The grass is gashed and rutted, the hillside littered with refuse, while hoardings and enamel signs advertising drinks and cosmetics sprout

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from the outraged earth. Up the side of this hill creep rows of new houses strung out singly along the road, or clotting into patches of angry pink. The whole hillside with its formless sprawl of tin and brass and harsh new tiling is like a shout, a shout which is a continuous embodied insult to the lovely building which stands opposite. Meanwhile the aeroplanes roar and swoop impartially over the twentieth century and the twelfth, circling round the towers of the cathedral, and rending the peace which has immemorially surrounded it.

The Twentieth Century and the Twelfth. In this ganglion of vulgarity and ugliness which fronts the beauty of the cathedral there is a note of deliberate defiance. It is exactly as if a small and dirty boy, unable to respond to beauty save by a feeling of vague discomfort—here is something which, he feels, he cannot understand, yet resents, resents because he is conscious that it belittles him, making him feel small and cheap and vulgar—is moved to assert his independence and to recover his self-respect by cocking snooks at what discomfits him. But although he cannot understand, he can destroy. I visited Chartres on the 13th July. In preparation for the fête upon the fourteenth a fleet of aeroplanes was rehearsing a demonstration. The cathedral was at once the base and the target of their operations. Arranged in three squadrons they flew over and round it, circled the towers, descended almost to the ground before the West front and then in *échelon* formation climbed slowly up its face.

As a symbol of power the demonstration was prodigious. Any single bomb dropped from any one of the so easily circling planes would, it was sufficiently obvious, destroy a part of the cathedral. As a manifestation of taste it was, one felt, less impressive. Detonating and erupting as they postured before that magnificent edifice, the aeroplanes constituted the appropriate, the final comment of the twentieth century upon the twelfth. It was natural and inevitable for the men of the twelfth century to build what was beautiful ; it is, it seems, natural and inevi-

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table for our own generation to construct what is ugly. I do not mean that we cannot build beautifully, if we please; but we so rarely do please. Beauty, indeed, is not for us an obvious, an overriding consideration. We are concerned with speed, with cheapness, with efficiency, and we attain them; but with beauty we are not concerned. And the result is that whenever some typical product of the twentieth century confronts us side by side with a monument of the past, we cannot avoid being humiliated by the contrast.

That you may realize it to the full, travel to Oxford by train. The first glimpse of the city reveals the dreaming spires celebrated by poets and guide-books and vulgarized in innumerable picture postcards. As you draw nearer, you see first an outer scurf of staring pink villas, and then the yellow dinginess of the mean buildings that surround the station; the first is the typical expression of the twentieth, the second of the nineteenth century. In the middle there stands still intact the core of grey buildings which has made the loveliness of Oxford famous, but the core is engirt by ever-deepening rings of meanness and squalor, as successive generations leave their mark upon the city.

BEAUTY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Beauty and its Lack in Stone, Sound, and Words. If we look at the buildings of the Cotswolds, at an Essex village, at a Queen Anne country house, or at Chartres Cathedral, and then compare them with the typical products of this age and the last, petrol pumps and garages, bungalows and railway stations, miners' cottages and national schools, gas works and power stations and rich men's 'follies', we must, I think, concede that ours is not an age that expresses itself easily in visual beauty.

Nor in audible. There was a period comprising the major part of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries, when a musician had only to set pen to paper to compose something which would at least not outrage a critical taste,

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which was at least reasonably good. Almost all the first-rate music of the world was composed during a period of about a hundred and fifty years from 1685, when Bach, Handel, and Scarlatti were born, to 1828 when Schubert died. But in addition to the great men, the good second-raters produced music that was worth more than all that has been written since the period ended, while the ordinary hack men writing decent, presentable stuff were as thick as blackberries in September. Our own age is so poor in creative artists that, if none of the sounds made since Schubert died were ever to be heard again, I for one should not care a row of semiquavers.

As with sound and stone, so also with words. Everybody more or less in fifth-century Athens seems to have written reasonably well; everybody more or less in Elizabethan England and in eighteenth-century France; the Augustans wrote well enough; the Victorians produced a round dozen of first-rate poets and half a dozen supreme novelists. Compared with the literature of these favoured periods, our own is poverty-stricken. If you want to know precisely how poverty-stricken, read those corroding books of literary appraisement, or rather of literary denigration by F. R. and Q. Leavis. We have of course our big men; we have Shaw and Wells from the immediate past; we have Virginia Woolf, Joyce, and, I should like to add, Forster in the present. But compared with the enormous bulk of the writing public, the first-rank writers are negligible. Never before, as Mrs. Leavis has pointed out, were there so many writers; never has the proportion of great ones to the others been so low. In short, this is no more an age of great literature than it is an age of great music, great painting, or great architecture. The fact is, and the admission may as well be made now as later, that, taking us by and large, we do not produce beauty. Why not? Partly, I suggest, because we do not appreciate it when we meet it, or miss it when we do not; because, in fact, we are not concerned with it one way or the other.

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Twentieth-Century Ideals. Our ideals lie in other directions. They are mainly bound up with the movement of pieces of matter. So far as those pieces of matter which are our own bodies are concerned, we desire not only that they should be moved but moved quickly. Hence the modern cult of speed. The distinctively modern use which we make of our bodies is to cause them to be transported as frequently as possible and as rapidly as possible from place to place. In regard to inorganic pieces of matter, we enjoy and admire the rapid displacement at controlled speeds and in specified directions of small round pieces of matter by long thin ones in the shape of mallets, bats, cues, clubs, sticks, and rackets; also by leather boots. For the rest we amuse ourselves with the pursuit of sport, which is the name we give to the introduction of small pieces of metal from a safe distance into the bodies of defenceless birds and beasts, and exhaust ourselves in the pursuit of wealth, which we desire mainly in order that we may expend it in the accumulation of the largest possible number of complex material objects, such as houses, refrigerators, radio sets, porcelain baths, telephones, motor-cars, pieces of shining metal, coloured stones, and, if we are persons of high culture, articles of 'virtu' such as 'old masters', Chippendale furniture, or Spode china.

In this way material things, their movement and their accumulation come to dominate our lives and to form the ideals of our leisure. And these ideals are cultivated not, as one might have been tempted to suppose, for the sake of any of the traditional ends of human activity, because of the happiness they bring, the beauty they create, the truth they make plain, the good they do, but for their own sweet selves.

The Cult of Speed. Consider, for example, our addiction to the rapid conveyance of our bodies in petrol-propelled mechanisms over the surface of the earth. If two men leave Manchester for Bettws-y-Coed and the one drives so gently that not a single speck of dust on a pedestrian's shoe is disturbed, while the other drives so vigorously that he leaves a trail of frightened

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humanity along the whole route, what margin separates the pair at their journey's end in Wales? Fifteen minutes! And how does the speed devotee spend that quarter of an hour which he has stolen from the clasp of inexorable Time? He lounges, all liver and no legs, in the bar a little longer before he feeds, consumes an extra cocktail, toys with a few stale magazines, grumbles that his food is not ready, brags a little about his driving. . . . The world suffers through his speed; and it suffers to no noble purpose. If he were a surgeon, hastening to a purulent appendix, we could bear with him. If he were a lover fresh home from the Indies yearning to meet his bride, we could bear with him. If he obtained any real or lasting satisfaction from his speed debauch, his conduct, although still intolerable, would be at least excusable. But he does not. He is just a fool in a hurry. He has no possible defence for his folly, and we know it as well as he knows it.

from
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(written 1937-8)

RECIPES FOR HUMAN IMPROVEMENT

We simply do not know how man is to be made better.

In this respect we are peculiar among the generations. Nearly all our predecessors have enjoyed some form of religious faith. They believed in the existence of God and they believed, too, that, if they put their trust in Him, they would be saved; saved, that is to say, from the solicitations of evil, saved to pursue the values. Few of my generation, fewer still of the generation which is younger than mine, share this belief. Consequently, we are to a quite exceptional degree at a loss when we come to consider the question, 'How can mankind be made better?' Our ignorance in this respect is, I repeat, exceptional. Almost every previous generation has kept some nostrum for human betterment up its sleeve. The nineteenth century was particularly prolific in this respect; but in the nineteenth century men believed in religion. Our bankruptcy will, I think, be better realized if we take a brief glance at some of the proposals in the field.

Methods of Coping with Modern Evil: (1) To withdraw from the World; the Buddhist Recipe. One seeks to divorce religion and culture from practical life. This is the doctrine favoured by such writers as Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard. It draws its inspiration from Buddhism and the philosophies of the East. These take culture seriously; they realize, that is to say—though they would use language different from mine to convey their

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realization—that the physical world is not the only world, that there is a spiritual world which contains values, and that these values give worth and meaning to human life. But Buddhism insists on the illusoriness of everyday life and would, therefore, deny that the values can be realized in it. It accordingly advocates withdrawal from practical life, in order that man may realize his true self by entering into the world of the spirit. This doctrine of withdrawal seems to me to be a doctrine of despair. The wise man is to give up his passions as a bad job, and to cut them off at the root; to seek, in fact, to have no passions. He is advised to mutilate himself in order to concentrate upon what he decides to be the most important part of himself, that part, namely, which is, or is in contact with, reality. This is to divide the self into two sections and to reject one of the sections.

The wise man, again, is to give this world up as a bad job and to leave it to stew in its own juice. This is to hand over the world to the enemy. It is no accident that movements of withdrawal, as exemplified by the Buddhists in India, the Cynics in the Ancient World, the Huxleys and Heards of to-day, have always flourished in times of insecurity, violence, and reaction. Because they withdraw its best minds from the service of their generation, they encourage those very evils which it is their purpose to escape.

(2) *To Change it; the Marxist Recipe.* Secondly, there is Marxism. This denies the existence of any world other than that which we know by means of our senses. It denies, therefore, the existence of values save such as can be realized in the process of living. That for Marxists is valuable, which is useful, useful, that is to say, because it assists the development of the next phase of the dialectical process of history, assists, in other words, the proletarian revolution. And when the proletarian revolution has succeeded and Communism is established, what will be useful, what valuable, then? It is not clear. For once Communism has been established, the dialectical process in history will come to

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a stop. Marx looks forward to 'an order of things in which there will no longer be classes or class antagonisms', and in which 'social *evolutions* will cease to be political *revolutions*'.

But if values are relative to a changing process, their function being to assist that process towards its consummation, it is difficult to understand what becomes of them once the consummation is realized. As far as I can see, with the exception of happiness, they will evaporate. Happiness is definite and intelligible. Its existence raises no question of 'ultimacy' or absoluteness. It is a state of human consciousness (or rather, as I should put it, it is a value whose medium of expression is human consciousness) and it can be realized in any state of society. My own guess is that happiness could, in the last resort, be shown to be analysable into states of consciousness which consist in the pursuit of the other three values.

The guess is one that cannot be pursued here,¹ but it is worth pointing out that it is not necessary to believe in the objectivity of values in order that we may pursue them; indeed, it is not necessary to think about them one way or the other. Hence the inhabitants of a Marxist Utopia would not perhaps, in spite of the official disappearance of values, behave very differently from other human beings who still believed in them.

Effects of the Denial of Values. It may be so, yet I cannot help thinking that once the Marxist Utopia was achieved, the recognition of and belief in values would again invade men's minds. If truth is regarded as relative, science is lost; for science becomes just that body of beliefs about the physical universe which it is useful to hold. If beauty is regarded as relative, art too is lost, for art becomes just that collection of pictures, music, and statuary which the members of a particular generation happen to like. Now human beings will not, I suggest, consent

¹ See my *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics*, Chapter XII where it is pursued.

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to perform the continuous labour, to undergo the unsparing efforts, which are necessary to the discovery of new truth in science, or to the production of new beauty in art, merely to provide useful beliefs and to cater for current tastes. Hence I should expect values to be once again acclaimed and consciously pursued by the artists and scientists of the Communist State of the future. Meanwhile, and pending its realization, values will continue to be repudiated by Communists.

The Need of Our Times. Some creed, it is obvious, is needed which, while recognizing the objectivity of values and so allowing for the existence of a real world in which they have their being, nevertheless succeeds in bringing that world into relation with the world of everyday, thus enabling values to be pursued in our daily lives. Something, it is obvious, is wanted to fill for the modern world the role which Christianity filled for society in the Middle Ages. I do not think that this need can be satisfied by the obsolete creeds that do duty for religion to-day. Indeed, it is hard to see how religion in its present form can survive another fifty years of indifference. But, as I have argued elsewhere in this book, modern man has a need of religion which to-day clamours for fulfilment, and will, I believe, sooner or later, be fulfilled. If this argument is valid, we may conclude that religion and religion alone can bridge the gap between this world and the world of value, and by opening men's eyes to the fact of value, fill them with the desire to pursue the values which they perceive. Let us suppose for a moment, that, as the religions have held, goodness, truth, and beauty (and possibly happiness) are the modes under which God permits Himself to be known by men. It follows that the function of religion, by achieving an integration between this world and the real world, will be to reveal God to man, and to cause man to love that which is revealed.

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THE NEED FOR RELIGION

I have only introduced this account of visits to village churches because of their effect in inducing me to become, almost for the first time, vividly aware of this need. For a surprise was in store for me. After each visit to church, I found myself, to my astonishment, in high spirits; in fact, not to put too fine a point on it, I was in a state of great exhilaration. On one occasion I had been finishing a book under pressure and suffering, perhaps from overwork; after church I felt fresh and capable of any effort, intellectual, spiritual, or mental. I arrived at another church with nerves on edge; I had allowed myself to be upset by little things—the non-arrival, for example, of some bottles of claret expected for the entertainment of week-end guests—and cursed at every noise; now nothing seemed to matter except the things that really did matter. The period of another visit was one during which I had been more than usually subject to moods; indeed, I had been through a period of depression which may be broadly described by saying that I was discontented unless I had had some positive reason for contentment, and so I had gone out of my way to invent positive reasons—meetings, dinners, dances, appointments, games, everything and anything to distract me from myself and to keep my attention turned resolutely outwards. And the distractions were growing less and less effective; the stimuli were failing to stimulate, the entertainments to amuse, with the result that an ever larger dose of ‘pleasure’ was required to produce an ever smaller amount of satisfaction.

And now I felt no need of distraction; it was enough to be alive. My condition, indeed, was precisely the reverse of what it had been; for now I was contented and would, I felt, remain so, unless I had some positive reason for discontent. Overflowing with good spirits, I wanted to talk to everybody. What was more, I was interested in what everybody had to say; not only did even the most commonplace remark seem worth making;

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more surprising still, it seemed worth hearing. How pleasant, I thought, is the society of one's kind, how delightful to find one's palate once again fresh for experience.

Reflections Upon the Causes of Exhilaration. This psychological condition which in degree of exhilaration was equivalent to drunkenness, in degree of perceptiveness to sobriety—one had all the fun of being drunk while remaining sober enough to enjoy it—was so unusual, that I was induced to reflect upon its cause. Was it because the service of the Church of England is so very beautiful that, in spite of maltreatment and misreading, it cannot fail to exalt the spirit, that I had been so moved? On consideration I thought not. The Church of England service is not so beautiful as all that, and had the aesthetic sense alone been concerned, I should have felt this sense of exhilaration in a ten-fold degree after listening to a concert of Mozart's chamber music. Yet, much as I enjoy the perfection of Mozart, he has never put me on such good terms with the world and with myself as this very imperfect performance of the ritual, this wretched rendering of the service of a dying creed. Was it, perhaps, the relief from boredom, the release from confinement, the sense of freedom arising from being once again in the open air, again able to laugh, to talk aloud, to throw my arms and legs about, to go where I would? Was it, in short, the pleasure of being no longer required to behave? Again I thought not. When I was a child, forced to spend an hour and a half in church twice every Sunday, I was no doubt very glad to get out of it. But that was because I was so terribly bored while I was in it, and my visits to village churches had certainly not bored me. On the contrary, I had been intrigued by the mixture of strangeness and familiarity with which the services had come to me and intrigued and amused by the clergymen.

Was it, perhaps, nostalgia for my childhood? Here at last, I felt, I was nearing the mark. Yet it was not for my childhood itself that the nostalgia was felt—mine was not, after all, a par-

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ticularly happy childhood; there have been periods of my life when I was much happier—as for something which was associated both with my childhood and with going to church. What could it be? It must, I thought, be religion. When I was a little boy, I went to church and I believed in God; now I did not go to church and was an agnostic. Was it, then, perhaps the case that I now needed a religion, needed it so badly that the lack of it had been incommoding me, albeit unconsciously, for a long time past? And if this was the case with me, was it not perhaps also the case with a large number of the men and women of my generation, and of the generation which has come to maturity since the war? Finally, does the assumption of this unsatisfied need provide a clue to the interpretation of our times? And with these questions, having passed from the particular to the general, I proceed to follow the clue suggested to me by my totally unwarrantable exhilaration after visiting village churches, and to inquire into the contemporary status of religion, and into the effects produced by its presence or absence upon educated people in England in the year 1939.

The causes of my pleasure were, I concluded, twofold. First, I in common with most other people have a need to believe; secondly, I in common with most other people have a need of community, that is to say, a need to gather with my fellows. Both needs are under modern conditions largely unfulfilled, and the momentary satisfaction of both that I had experienced that morning in the village church was the cause of my happiness.

That mankind has a need to believe is, I think, sufficiently obvious. We lack the courage to gaze into pain, evil, death, and the deserts beyond death, with our own eyes; we need to live in a citadel of dogma and to look out upon the universe through the misty glass of myth and legend which are the windows of the citadel. Men like, within limits, to know what to think, and to be told, within limits, what to do. They are unequal, that is to say, to the strain of deciding every question of belief, every

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problem of morals, on merits, with nothing better than their own individual judgement and experience to guide their decision. The human mind, like a creeping plant, demands a support to which it may cling and upon which it may grow and, finding it, embraces it with fierce intensity. The discomfort occasioned by the absence of such a support is none the less keen because its source is seldom realized. Nearly all the races of mankind, nearly all the preceding generations of our own race, have devised some form of spiritual support. They have worshipped gods, set up idols, subscribed to creeds, taken part in rituals, attended religious services. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the gods, idols, creeds, rituals, and services sprang from and appealed to some fundamental need of their natures.

Now the generation which has grown to maturity since the war has, broadly speaking, no god and takes part in no religious service. It would seem to follow that either this generation is a biological 'sport', in the sense that it lacks a characteristic which was present in its predecessors, or else that the need exists but is driven underground. The latter is, as I believe, the more probable explanation. In the Chapter on 'Christianity' I have tried to draw a picture of the religion which the Church offers to the educated modern man. It is, I suggest, totally unsuited to his needs. Suppose that we grant that a man *does* require moral support, *does* hunger for sustenance for his spirit, *does need* guidance in his conduct—then we cannot fail to note that the provision offered to him in the modern world is not such as will satisfy his requirements; that the sustenance is inadequate, and that the guidance is not given. Coming to us from the remote past, the creed which is offered to us as our religion is simple in structure, unsure in its foundations, and unadapted to the complexities of the modern intellect. Thus the mind searching for a substratum of code and creed which it can take for granted and on which it can rest, finds none, and is left to drift without anchor over the uncharted seas of modern thought. There is, I conclude, a need of religion in the world

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to-day, which the emasculated voice of the Anglican Church, preaching its decorous doctrines to congregations of elderly spinsters, can do little or nothing to satisfy.

THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY

A Riding Tour. In the spring of 1937 I went, accompanied by a daughter, on a riding tour. We possess a cob of our own which carried me, and we hired a fierce little pony for my daughter. We rode from Shamley Green near Guildford, over Hascombe Hill, then across the Weald to Black Down, over Black Down and so to Fernhurst. After a night at Fernhurst we went southward over Woolbeding Common, through Iping and Stedham—quiet, lovely places—and so on to the Downs between Cocking and Amberley. It was high spring and the country through which we passed was a blaze of blossom and flowers. I have always regarded this part of the Weald, which runs north and south of the western end of the border between Surrey and Sussex, as an enchanted corner of England. There are few main roads, and the cars have not, therefore, in any appreciable numbers ‘got at’ it. The villages are small and sufficiently distant from London, sufficiently lacking in ‘good-class’ hotels, to retain a life of their own; and some of them are very beautiful, Dial Green, for example, and Lodsworth, and Alfold farther north. As for the country, its beauty is beyond my powers of description. It is small-scale country and exhibits in a pre-eminent degree that characteristic of rapidly changing view and feature which is distinctively associated with southern English scenery. First copse, then dell with stream, then fields and orchard, then farm, then open common—you will see them all within a mile—and you will see, too, what I take to be the special glory of the country in late April and early May, flowers and blossoming trees. These exist in incredible variety and profusion all over this part of the Weald. When at last we came to the Downs, the country was no less lovely, but lovely in a different, and to my mind more com-

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monplace, fashion. But everybody knows the Sussex Downs and there is no need for me to say anything about what everybody knows. Indeed, there is no need for me to describe this riding tour at all. I have been led into this indefensible digression by the sheer pleasure of recalling the occasion and writing about what has given me such pleasure to recall. However, to complete the story: we rode along the Downs from Cocking to Amberley, spent a day riding with friends on the Downs round Amberley, then turned northward for a night at Wisborough Green, and so home again to Shamley Green.

I was originally led to embark upon what, I have just admitted, has become a digression by a reflection of which it is high time that the reader had the benefit. The reflection is upon the contrast between the isolation imposed by driving a car and the sociability, the almost embarrassing sociability which attends a tour on horseback. Go out in a car, and nobody speaks to you and you speak to nobody; go, as we did, on a riding tour and everybody is your friend. Proletarians talked to us, cyclists laughed at us, motorists abased themselves before us. When we came to an inn, the place turned itself upside down in an excited endeavour to accommodate the horses and to find them something, even if it were chicken-corn, that they could eat. And everybody praised the pleasures of riding and said what a pity it was that it had gone out, and what a good thing for everybody that it was coming back. The old ladies who, in this part of Surrey and Sussex, are everywhere to be found dwelling in houses set in great paddocks which exist solely for the purpose of providing a long drawn-out euthanasia for aged and obese horses, competed for the honour of accommodating our steeds, and not only our steeds, but ourselves. It is only when riding through the country on a horse that I have ever been invited to dine and spend the night by complete strangers. One way and another, I cannot remember to have met and talked with so many people hitherto unknown to me as during the five days of our riding through Surrey and Sussex. Now I do not wish to suggest that there was ever a time

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when most people spent their lives riding through the countryside and their days in idle chatter with strangers, but I do maintain that, prior to the motor age, the social texture of men's lives resembled more closely the experience which I enjoyed on my riding tour than the experience which the average motorist 'enjoys' at the week-end. It has been customary in the past for men to foregather, to drop into casual conversation, and to pass the time of day with strangers. All these things happened to me when I was riding, but none of them happens to me when I am motoring; nobody passes the time of day with me, nobody mentions the weather, and my fellow motorists regard me with indifference or hostility.

And so I come back to my original point. The world was never so lacking in occasions for meeting one's fellows, whether in casual social intercourse, or in formal periodic gatherings, as it is to-day.

Disappearance of Social Units. From time immemorial men have belonged to social cliques and groups, each member of whom knew and was known by the rest. But in the modern large town a man has a hundred different acquaintances, belongs to a hundred different units, with the result that most of his friends and acquaintances are unknown to one another. Now if one meets A, B, and C to-day, and foregathers with X, Y, and Z to-morrow, and if A, B, and C never meet and gather with X, Y, and Z, then one misses the sense of belonging to a social whole whose being, just because it is more than the sum total of the beings of each of its members taken separately, informs and sustains the being of each of its members.

Even within the family, occasions of community diminish. The Victorian family was a close little *bloc* whose members, however they might quarrel among themselves, nevertheless constituted a social unit which presented a united front to the world outside. But each member of a modern urban family knows a different set of friends, and moves in a different social circle, coming home only to feed and to sleep. The family, in

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fact, has ceased to function except in the refectory and in the dormitory. It does not go *en bloc* to church, it participates in no 'all-in' gatherings with relations, and the occasions on which it comes together within itself grow fewer.



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